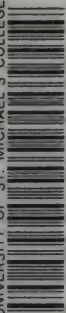


UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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STUDIES

IN THE

EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH
CRITICISM

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL FACULTY
OF YALE UNIVERSITY IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

LAURA JOHNSON WYLIE

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The thesis here published was begun in November, 1892, and presented to the Dean of the Philosophical Faculty on November 2, 1893. It is now printed by the authority and at the expense of the University, in the hope that it may be useful to other students of the period which it covers.

ALBERT S. COOK.

YALE UNIVERSITY, February, 1894.



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STUDIES IN THE EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH CRITICISM.



I.

JOHN DRYDEN.

THE scientific spirit, from the first the undertone of the Renaissance movement, became dominant in England only toward the latter half of the seven-
teenth century, when men, in some degree at leisure from themselves, could turn freely to the contemplation of the universe and of their own social and intellectual experience. The literature of the time was quickly touched by this universal delight in the operation of law. The imagination became the domain of reason; excessive emphasis of individuality was supplanted by a taste for beauty of type and by zeal for the general good. The application of practical tests, the acceptance of reason as the final judge of truth, were virtues hardly less characteristic of the new poetry than of the new science. Suddenly asked to give an account of itself, literature began forthwith to define its aims and to direct its efforts toward immediate results; its work was emphatically declared to be to delight only that it might instruct, while a growing sensitiveness of the literary conscience forbade any departure from the straightest and shortest way to this end.

Under the double stimulus of a search after reasonableness and a demand for defined standards of literary excellence, not only did all the writing of the day become essentially conscious and analytic, but formal criticism was speedily recognized as a distinct branch of literature. Before the end of the century there had arisen a class of professed critics, — Langbaine and Dennis, Walsh, "the muses' judge and friend,"¹ Mr. Rymer, whose "judicious observation"² Dryden himself praises. These men, whose works are now interesting only to the antiquary or the student, were, indeed, hewers of wood and drawers of water; but, though their names are remembered chiefly through some happy reference by a greater than they, the extent of their influence was only less significant than the general attitude of men of letters toward literary theory. There was hardly a poet who did not explain himself in prologue and epilogue, preface and dedication. Sir Robert Howard touched the questions in dispute with something of the dilettantism of high life; Thomas Shadwell, proud in his intellectual and moral integrity, laid down the law with the rough common-sense of a seventeenth-century Philistine; the great Hobbes himself wrote an answer to Sir William Davenant's preface to *Gondibert*, in which, by indicating the relation of experience to judgment and fancy — the one giving strength and structure to a poem, the other giving it ornament — he suggested the

¹ Pope: *Essay on Crit.*, l. 729.

² Pref. to *All for Love*; *Works*, V. 338.

metaphysical and psychological foundations of criticism.

But universal and many-sided as was this critical interest during the years following the Restoration, it was through John Dryden, poet, dramatist, and man of letters, that the spirit newly pervading literature found truest interpretation. Allied in imagination to the generation that had just passed away, in reason to the stricter sect of the new scientists, he brought into criticism at once the definiteness of a treatment thoroughly scientific and something of his own breadth of sympathy. The immediate questions with which he dealt were of transient interest; the juster appreciation of the past, which marks our century, has destroyed his claim to be called "the father of English criticism."¹ But his critical writings formed a turning point in our literary history. The criticism of his predecessors, however shrewd or wise, was but the superficial system of a half-right analyst or the detached utterance of a poet or literary artist. From these elements of a system Dryden elaborated a reasonable and scientific English criticism; and though he left it still poor in knowledge and narrow in scope, it had, from his first word, come to a full understanding of itself and its philosophy.

Dryden's mature judgment of the state of criticism in England when he "commenced man of letters" is fortunately recorded. In the *Essay on Satire*² (1693) he tells us that he was then in the

¹ Johnson: *Lives*, I. 425.

² *Works*, XIII. 5.

rudiments of his poetry, having rather the ambition of a writer than the skill, and compelled to draw the outline of his art without any living master to instruct him in it. The art of poetry, he said, had hitherto been better praised than studied in England, since Shakespeare had written happily rather than knowingly and justly, and Jonson, whose knowledge was undoubted, had made a monopoly of his learning. He had thus found himself, "before the use of the loadstone or knowledge of the compass, . . . sailing in a vast ocean without other help than the pole-star of the ancients, and the rules of the French stage amongst the moderns." Was Dryden's judgment of his predecessors too severe a one? Had English critics left to their successors neither loadstone nor compass for their longer voyages? In the history of English criticism itself lies the answer.

The earliest phase of the classic Renaissance in England, as throughout all Europe, had shown itself in an enthusiastic absorption of Greek and Latin learning. The editing of texts, the teaching of the tongues that contained all wisdom, especially the application of the new learning to a better understanding of the Bible, had sufficed for the generation of Colet and Erasmus — if, in this respect, we may consider Erasmus an Englishman. Analysis of these new treasures, the discriminating and classifying of their various characteristics, was but a step in advance. Yet even thus early the critics were divided against themselves. The pedantry of learning had betaken itself to a slavish

adoration of Cicero and a clumsier imitation of his style, while a liberal classicism was upheld by the party of the cultured and sceptical Erasmus.

[The details of this earlier study of the classics — even the wranglings of the Ciceronians, leavened by the wit of their great opponent — may, for the most part, be ignored by all but the student of a special period. Not so the mark that it left on the thought and language of the English people. Suddenly aware of new standards of taste, of a world of thought alien from their own, they were first dazzled by the brightness of antiquity, then took up the slow process of understanding and analyzing its treasures. They were then, in a sense, only learning to think; their whole intellectual experience was to be related to that of a foreign and bygone civilization. The classification of mere externals, the endless hair-splitting over non-essentials that marked their struggle towards clearness of thought and idea seemed, indeed, to be fruitless toil. But clearness of conception once gained, their own language was to be tried by a new standard.] Accordingly, from the earlier part of the sixteenth century, following in the wake of its many Latin grammars, we find distinct traces of an effort to define the rules of the mother-tongue. Cox's *Rhetoric*, published about 1530, seems to be the first of the manuals that have in some way to do with the English language. It is a curious fact in the history of thought that we seem to have had a rhetoric at least fifty-six years before we had a grammar. In 1586 Bullokar

could speak of his *Bref Grammar* as the "first grammar of English that ever was, except my grammar at large,"¹ and of this "grammar at large" there has been found no trace.

[Had students been left to wrangle over the claims of the ancients, and quietly to apply the theories of antiquity to the refining of their mother-tongue, the history of criticism must have been very different. But it was inevitable that national traditions should soon clash with an authority thus arbitrarily claiming supremacy in behalf of an alien culture. In England this struggle was peculiarly severe and prolonged.] While in France the national literature had by the middle of the sixteenth century been almost wholly supplanted by the tradition of Greece and Rome, there are to be traced in England, from the beginning of the Renaissance, two distinct and usually very unequal forces. Classicism was, indeed, from the first, supported by a few cultured and conscious workmen; but it was long overshadowed by a growing literature that was the flowering of centuries of the nation's life. The Classicists reasoned and invented, — their theories were ignored, their inventions, whether of verse-form or fable, were touched with a magic that they knew not of. But though this complication of the problem foiled the attempt to bring both language and imagination under the rule of law, the clashing of the two principles stimulated criticism as nothing else could have done. Was the English language

¹ *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

capable of the highest perfection? Were its undeniable beauties legitimate, or were they based, as most of the learned thought, on men's ignorance of a better type? Was English to reach its best through development of its native character, or through conformity to the standards of Latin and Greek? Around quantity and accent, rime and verse, a great battle raged; but the battle was fought for more and greater than these.

A few pages in Ascham's *Scholemaster* (1570), and four letters that passed between Spenser and Harvey (published 1580) indicate how, for the most part, scholars and thinkers then regarded these questions. Ascham is already, in 1570, a staunch upholder of the authority of the ancients. It is by the precepts of Horace and Aristotle, by the examples of Euripides, Sophocles, and Seneca, that a modern play ought to be tried, though "few men in writyng of Tragedies in our dayes have shot at this marke."¹ In Greek and Latin are to be sought the "trew Patterne of Eloquence, if in any other mother tong we looke to attaine either to perfit utterance of it our selves, or skilfull judgement of it in others."² A zeal for perfect writing is as marked as this deference to antiquity. Ascham commends Mr. Watson for not allowing his *Absolon* — one of the two modern plays that he mentions as true to the classic standard — to be published, only because in two or three places the anapæst is used for the iambus.³ His care for perfection is shocked at the many "bookes and

¹ *Scholemaster*, p. 169. ² *Ib.*, p. 167. ³ *Ib.*, p. 169.

balettes" which make "great shew of blossomes and buddes," but "in whome is neither roote of learnyng, nor frute of wisdom at all," at a generation that "for ignorance can not like, and for idlenes will not labor, to cum to any perfitnes at all."¹ Yet in spite of ignorance and idleness, he trusts that Englishmen will not cling to their "rude beggerly ryming" — the legacy of the Goths — which "were even to eate ackornes with swyne when we may freely eate wheate bread emonges men."²

Ascham admitted that, owing to its monosyllables, English did not "well receive the nature of *Carmen Heroicum*," and that the hexameter did "rather trotte and hoble than runne smothly in our English tong."³ But Spenser and Harvey went even farther, and were enthusiastic believers in the exchange of our "Barbarous and Balductum Rymes"⁴ for "Artificial Verses," the one, says Harvey, "being in manner of pure and fine Goulde, the other but counterfet, and base, ylfauoured Copper." Their appeal to authority is, indeed, thorough-going. The suggestion that "one and the same ortographie"⁵ be established by Parliament, in order that there be a foundation for a regular grammar and prosody, outruns the dreams of a Johnson or a Swift; the "general surceasing and silence of balde Rymers,"⁶ to be brought to pass by the authority of a literary tribunal, was

¹ *Scholemaster*, pp. 178, 179. ² *Ib.*, p. 177. ³ *Ib.*, p. 178.

⁴ Haslewood: *The Arte of English Poesie*, II. 264.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 265.

⁶ *Ib.*, p. 288.

beyond the power of even the French Academy. The quoting of Aristotle and Horace, the emphasis laid on form, the appeal to custom as "the infallible and souveraigne rule of all rules"¹ — Boileau himself could not enunciate a stricter Classic creed.

There are in the writings of even the earliest critics many signs of the later and more scientific Classicism. Here and there we find crude attempts to compare the periods of literature, or a declaration that literary perfection is slow to come and short of duration. Gascoigne (1575) almost forestalled the later Classic school in expressing one of its fundamental rules: "Finish the sentence and meaning at the end of euery staffe, where you wright stauess, & at the end of euery two lines where you wright by coopes or poulters measure."² In such arguments as Daniel's defense of rime, "by Custome that is before all Law, Nature that is above all Arte,"³ there are contained in germ the principles of scientific criticism. But, after all, the chief service of these students of literary method lay in cultivating a sense of form, and in establishing a conviction that the English language and versification could reach perfection only through the rigid application of law. There is even in their own style an occasional approach to Classic lucidity and directness. Thus Bolton's *Hypercritica*⁴ (1610-17), though showing the compass of the new critical spirit in its attempt to

¹ Haslewood: *The Arte of English Poesie*, II. 281.

² *Ib.*, p. 11.

³ *Ib.*, p. 197.

⁴ *Ib.*

treat of prose as well as verse, is of special interest for the clearness of presentation and terseness of expression that mark its kinship with the new age.

It was in establishing a theory of poetry that critics during those early years spent most of their energy. Among the many attempts to define the laws of verse, Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*, published in 1589, was unrivaled both in exactness of treatment and in general influence. A praiseworthy effort after analysis is evident in the "contriving" of the dissertation into three books: "the first of Poets and Poesie, the second of Proportion, the third of Ornament." But in spite of a certain clearness of treatment, the analysis is thoroughly superficial, and the thought often vitiated by the prevailing taste for Italianism. Though the exact definition of at least one hundred and seven figures shows a critical attempt to account for every form of expression, they are distinguished largely by external qualities — are compared to the colors laid on ladies' lips and cheeks, or are said sometimes to give gloss only to language, sometimes to give it efficacy by sense.¹ In all that pertains to the mechanics of verse and language, Puttenham is, indeed, conscientious to enthusiasm. "There cannot be in a maker," he says, "a fowler fault than to falsifie his accent to serue his cadence, or by vntrue orthographie to wrench his words to help his rime,"² and he de-

¹ Haslewood: *The Arte of English Poesie*, I. 115, 119.

² *Ib.*, p. 67.

lights in those who have "by their thankfull studies so much beautified our English tong."¹ This regard for his own language, and his truly English common sense, temper his admiration of other literatures. He praises the gifts of the English in comparison with those of the Italians and French, and, in treating of the Greek and Latin poetry, tries to consider it only in so far as it conforms with that of England. The same moderation, perhaps necessary to a book in which, "as it were, a whole receipt of Poetry is prescribed,"² makes him, though his inclination is perceptibly national, a trimmer on the subject of rime. He begins by saying that rime counterbalances the quantity of Greek and Latin verse, and then spends a chapter in telling how "if all maner of sodaine innouations were not very scandalous, especially in the lawes of any language or arte . . . the vse of the Greeke and Latine feete might be brought into our vulgar poesie, and with good grace inough."³

Side by side with this attempt to bring English under the classic yoke, or at least to test it by the standards of Greece and Rome, there was carried on a greater struggle, which both foreshadowed the ordeal of the next century, and gave occasion to one of the rare books of our literature. The attack of a practical Puritanism⁴ that saw in art and beauty but the enemies of the spiritual

¹ Haslewood: *The Arte of English Poesie*, I. 48.

² *Ib.*, II. 123.

³ *Ib.*, I. 85.

⁴ Gosson: *The School of Abuse* (1579).

life was answered by the most spiritual of the Puritans ; and Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* (1583-1595) is the monument of the noblest phase of perhaps the noblest movement of English thought. Filled with a longing for perfection, but a perfection beyond the thought of any but a poet, Sidney gives us the poetry rather than the art or the theory of criticism. Yet his enthusiasm never lets go its hold of fact ; if he speaks of the imagination, reason is his guide ; if he is inspired by Plato, he has learned of Aristotle. "There is no art delivered unto mankind," he says, "that hath not the works of nature for his principal object";¹ but the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, and lifted by the vigor of his own invention into another nature, is 'not enclosed within the narrow warrant of nature's gifts, but freely ranges within the zodiac of his own wit.'² The idealism of this last, at first sight the expression of an arbitrary Romanticism, does not hinder Sidney from the consideration of poetic form. It is, perhaps, in his treatment of the drama that his classic sympathy is most evident. Of the English dramas that he knows, only *Gorboduc* observes rules of "honest civility" or of "skillful poetry";³ and *Gorboduc*, while he praises it as "climbing to the height of Seneca's style, and as full of notable morality,"⁴ he censures for its violations of the unities "both by Aristotle's precept and common reason."⁵

¹ *Defense of Poesy*, p. 7.² *Ib.*³ *Ib.*, p. 47.⁴ *Ib.*⁵ *Ib.*, p. 48.

But if Sidney accepted the classic standard for the stage, he was the most eloquent champion of the English language and verse. He was, as we learn from the letters of Spenser and Harvey,¹ of the number who were trying to establish a fixed orthography and invariable quantities in English; and in the eyes of those judges, his example was likely to weigh more heavily than Ascham's precepts. Perhaps it was because the language was already rich in poetic forms and possibilities that he treated the relative excellence of ancient and modern verse-forms with such catholicity and philosophy: Since the modern form delights, he says, though in its own way, "it obtaineth the same purpose; there being in either, sweetness, wanting in neither, majesty."² In these technical questions, as in all else, Sidney looks to the end rather than to the means; is concerned with the guidance of poet or critic far less than with the spiritual interpretation of literature. But this perception of the things of the spirit, the ardor of his morality, and the intensity of his enthusiasm, give his words their enduring power, and make his book a perpetual call to that high thinking which is the corner-stone of the poet's art.

Sidney had spoken to the fine spirits of all ages; but the skillful literary craftsmen of the Restoration instinctively turned from the poetry of his method to the great Classic dramatist of the English Renaissance. Though he wrote under the

¹ Haslewood: *The Arte of English Poesie*, II. 260, 264.

² *Defense of Poesy*, p. 56.

very shadow of the Elizabethan literature, Ben Jonson is even to this day the type of the conscious and conscientious artist, the apostle of system and order in literary workmanship ; and this prescient sympathy with the method and spirit of the coming generation destined him to shape the literature of England's Classic period, where almost every page, by tribute or by style, bears witness to his inspiration. Jonson's example of his art was, moreover, supported by his teaching ; in the few pages of *Timber: or Discoveries* are the precepts which contain in little most of the later Classic criticism. The view, to be sure, is throughout that of the craftsman. Jonson interrogated nature and experience to find the rules of workmanship, the laws of his art. He did not try, as Dryden declares, to make a monopoly of his learning or to hoard the fruit of study and experience ; but, his end being creation, his thoughts of his art come to us as *obiter dicta* rather than enunciations of principle. He was, indeed, too truly Classic to ignore the need of system or of training. Not only did he try to make good the long-felt want of an English grammar, but he again and again tells us that he would have the poet such as "he is or should be by nature, by exercise, by imitation, by study," brought "through the disciplines of grammar, logic, rhetoric and the ethics."¹ Consciousness of purpose, deference to the past, acceptance of reason as the supreme authority, mark Jonson's poetry and criticism. Besides his example of careful

¹ *Timber*, p. 75.

workmanship, and the impulse that he gave to the critical habit of mind, he first clearly and definitely stated the chief principles of Classic criticism: the need of understanding causes as well as results; the reducing of natural excellences to an art; the doing by reason rather than by chance; the perception that knowledge of laws is as efficacious for the poet as for the critic. If there was here no system, there were the elements from which a system must develop; the development of this system, broadened and modified by the spirit of a new age, was to be Dryden's work.]

It is significant of his relation to the old age and to the new that Dryden should couple the authority of the ancients with the rules of the French authors. Under the tutelage of antiquity critical thought had grown to its full stature; by contact and companionship with the literature of France its further development was to be in great part guided. Even in the earliest writings of the Restoration there are unmistakable signs of a new period, a period when the literatures of France and England were no longer to be isolated, but by mutual interchange of experience were to be enriched each with the gains of the other. The beginning of this movement towards solidarity of thought is inconspicuous and unpromising enough. It is hard to tell from Dryden's earlier attitude whether attraction or antipathy bears the larger part in his interest in France, and contemporary literature is full of gibes at French fashions and

French romances, at the harshness of the French language, the shallowness of French thought, and the artificiality of French morality. Yet, in spite of jeers that too often marked a crude taste, and of scorn sometimes shallower than what it despised, Englishmen followed French fashions, translated French romances, and copied French plays. A growing community of purpose was at last breaking down the barriers of national antipathy and difference of taste, and, in the light of this new sympathy, England first learned to know the great contemporary literature that had grown out of a different past, was developing under different conditions, and had already attained a perfection which was fast becoming the English ideal.

The distinctively French influence on Dryden's earlier criticism came from Corneille, and the discussion centering in the judgment of the Academy on the *Cid* (1638). Early French criticism had passed through the same stages as the English, — but with a difference; the preponderance of the Classical spirit was offset by no such movement as the English outburst of Romantic literature, and the scales had early tipped towards a determined Classicism. By the middle of the sixteenth century the victory of Classic over national forms had already been assured. Whether mediæval tradition had exhausted itself, or whether the revolution was due to a subtle sympathy of taste, [by 1552 the national drama had been banished, at least from Paris, and Seneca had become the model and authority of French playwrights.

Du Bellay had, in 1549, taken up the defense of the French language,¹ and from that time the work of classifying, revising, and reforming it knew no pause. The final step was taken by Malherbe in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, when he tried to establish order in his native language by taking the French of Paris as its standard, and at the same time insisted that its verse should be harmonious, simple, and conformable to the dictates of common sense.

Had Malherbe and his followers been left to fight their own battles, later French literature might even have reflected the extreme of Romantic whimsicality. For though Classicism had then little to fear from a national movement, it was fiercely assailed by the affectations of Italy and Spain. But the adoption of their cause by the Court, and the establishment of the Academy (1635) as the recognized literary tribunal, assured the authority of the Classic criticism, even while altering the whole course of its development. Literature, taken under the protection of the State, spoke with authority, became more canonical and refined, but, on the other hand, separated itself from the national life, and invited the attacks of liberal and daring thinkers. Debarred from progress in politics, religion, and science, the radicals of that day turned the battle perforce against accepted standards in art and letters. Sometimes in the name of philosophy, sometimes in that of religion, often with the banter of a polite and ignorant so-

¹ *Défense et Illustration de la Langue Française* (1549).

ciety, they insinuated their principles: the perfectibility of intellect, the supremacy of reason, the right of free thought. That the interests at stake were trivial, that the subjects discussed needed only definition to vanish into thin air, does not affect the importance of the issue; the questions of standard and authority, of judgment and taste, that divided critics for two generations, were a training-ground for the broader speculations of the next century.]

The divergence between the orthodox and the sceptical criticism was already clearly marked when Chapelain and the Academy passed sentence on the *Cid* (1638). This proceeding has been variously judged—and with justice on each side—as the extreme of human or critical imbecility, and as a praiseworthy attempt to uphold principles in literature. Yet whatever our judgment of the attitude of the Academy or of the taste and wisdom of its sentence, this date marks an epoch in the history of criticism. “It is from *Les Sentiments de l’Académie sur le Cid*,” says Brunetière, “that there dates in France, if I may so call it, an applied criticism, that criticism which seeks to found its judgments on principles not only more general than the personal impression of the judge, but more general than these judgments themselves; and that seeks in the works which it examines to discover the laws of their genera.”¹ One doctrine of this new criticism was quickly applied and developed; the judgment by general laws rather

¹ *L’Évolution des Genres*, p. 76.

than by individual taste was preëminently the work of the Classic school of France. But the separation of a formal and academic criticism from the spontaneous forces of literary activity, though conducive to the speedy elaboration of a system, was fatal to its higher perfection, and retarded the development of French criticism by at least a century.

It was in its relation to Corneille's development that the judgment of the Academy chiefly affected Dryden; for Corneille is undoubtedly the Frenchman who, directly and indirectly, most influenced English thought during the early years of the Restoration. There was, indeed, enough in common in the circumstances and characters of the poet-critics to account for a certain similarity of view. Corneille, inheriting the traditions of the Gallicized Classic drama, had yet a decided liking for the romances and extravagances that were dear to the popular heart. In the midst of many clashing literary forms, he began to write with but little knowledge of theory. The fact that he succeeded in giving pleasure — which he declares to be the chief and absolute end of a drama — when he ignorantly followed common sense, as well as when he obeyed the laws of the ancients, encouraged him to adopt even toward Aristotle a tone of friendly equality little justified by the uncertainty and bewilderment of his taste. This uncertainty of taste was partly the result of circumstances, partly a consequence of his many-sided sympathy with his own times. His sensitiveness

to the clashing forces then seeking reconciliation in literature led him to no sure critical conclusions, and his subjection to the sentimental and falsely Romantic ideals of his age was fatal to the fineness of his perceptions. With something of Dryden's broad literary sympathy, he yet fails to grow like him in refinement and delicacy of discrimination. In the discussion in which he took so vehement a part, taste was too often the monopoly of one side and freedom of the other. Moreover, while his absorption in dramatic work limited the scope of his criticisms, the intensity of his partisanship made them those of a special pleader. He dealt with results rather than with causes ; an infringement of law that was yet beautiful he marked as an exception, but found in it no challenge to search for the broader law in which the exception had its place.

To the artistic purposes that shaped his activity, and the circumstances in which his theories developed, Corneille's criticism owed its peculiar character and interest. Condemned by an authority that he, too, professed to obey, Corneille turned in self-defense to a fresh interpretation of Aristotle and Horace. His study was neither wholly scholarly nor wholly disinterested ; but he bent his energies to an exact comprehension of the meaning of these great critics, and then to a conscientious testing of his own plays, "as those that he knew best," by their rules. He thus dealt with their teaching in the most technical and matter-of-fact way, seeking in them definitions and principles of

play-structure, not even disdaining their authority in such minute matters as exits and entrances and the marginal writing of stage directions. Regarding the *Poetics* and the *Ars Poetica* as storehouses of rules for the stage, Corneille is sometimes hard pressed to keep his reverence, and does not even try to hide his scorn of the commentators who "have explained them as grammarians and philosophers."¹ "The reading them may make us learned," he says, "but cannot give us much light for our success in the theatre."² Especially difficult to him is the understanding of Aristotle's definitions. "Aristotle," he complains, "defined his terms so little that he leaves us in doubt what he would say."³ As to the unities, then the subject of special interest to the playwright, he finds them founded in reason, and necessary to the artistic beauty of a poem, yet admits that they hamper a poet in treating of a great or noble subject. We are reminded of Dryden's habit of "following rules at a distance,"⁴ when Corneille tells us that in order not to condemn plays that have succeeded, we must not apply Aristotle's rules too rigorously, or that "at least we must give them a favorable interpretation."⁵ It was this protest in favor of his own time, as well as his bold and creative imagination, that made his work the source and rallying-point of a freer criticism.

¹ *Discours du Poème Dram.*; *Œuvres*, I. 16.

² *Ib.*, p. 14.

³ *Ib.*, p. 31.

⁴ Pref. to *Don Sebastian*; *Works*, VII. 312.

⁵ *Discours de la Tragédie*; *Œuvres*, I. 63.

Fortunately for Dryden and England, French criticism was interpreted to them by the most gifted critic of his generation. St. Évremond, during most of his long and inexplicable exile, lived in London, where he was the delight of literary and polite society. Society was, indeed, his element. "M. de St. Évremond," says Maizeaux, his admiring friend and biographer, "must be considered as a distinguished officer who has always loved the belles-lettres, as a refined courtier who has never written but for his own amusement or to please his friends."¹ This dilettantism of purpose may account for his failure to make any formal presentation of his theories; but his writing passed about widely in manuscript, and his opinions were disseminated in elaborate letters, and in conversation with the wits and nobles and poets of his time. The consummate knowledge of the world which he brought to bear on the interpretation of literature was, indeed, his sufficient warrant for influence in a society that longed after the literary discussions then the fashion in France, and among men of letters who were keenly alive to new points of view and germinal thoughts in criticism.

St. Évremond's scorn of verbal or literal processes, the sign-manual of the citizen of the world, would have been fatal to any but a born critic. Though he lived for about forty years in England, he never understood the language, and depended on the explanations of his friends for a knowledge

¹ *Œuvres*, I. 3.

of even its best plays.¹ Yet in this awkward fashion he got not only a clear idea of the English drama, but a realization of its bearing and relations. If in his literary intercourse and in his ideal of education he was wont to leave to grammarians the scrupulous explanation of words and phrases, an intuition as rare in criticism as in science or history revealed to him the spirit without an over-careful reading of the letter. Nor was this rare intuition St. Évremond's only gift. Daring in thought, epicurean in philosophy, fastidious in taste, he was the slave neither of party nor idea, and represented the thought of his age as well at its best as in its many-sidedness. [His æstheticism attracted him to Classic standards, and in some measure allied him to Racine and Boileau, yet his freedom of thought and sympathy checked his enthusiasm in their behalf, and made him far more really of the party of Corneille and the moderns. Law, indeed, was to be loved, that confusion might be avoided; good-sense, that the ardor of an inflamed imagination might be checked; but there must be taken from law all harmful constraint; and that over-scrupulous reason must be banished which, by too great attachment to justice, leaves nothing free or natural.² There can, in the nature of things, be but few eternal laws, few being founded on good-sense, and on the solid reason that will always endure. In the perception of these laws under obscuring phenomena, as well as in the appreciation of shading and balance of

¹ *Œuvres*, I. 79.² *Ib.*, III. 280.

character, he is alone in his age. A man of the world, he was yet a thinker; a lover of beauty, his law was reason; a sceptic, he realized the power of tradition; a philosopher, he was guided by taste. In him we see the next century, — its philosophy, its gayety, its scepticism; but the thought of Voltaire speaks the language of Louis XIV; and in spite of broader knowledge and surer theory we still feel the charm of the union.

The establishment of a sound system of criticism was threatened fully as much by the dull and perplexed taste of Dryden's age as by the meagreness of an earlier criticism or the tyranny of French example. The writer of the Restoration was almost wanting in the sensitiveness to beauty that seems sometimes to compensate for a shallow or unformulated philosophy. Twenty years' break in literary tradition had vitiated even the crude taste of the Elizabethan period, and destroyed its incipient sense of beauty as the standard of art. There was, besides, a total lack of adjustment between expression and thought. During the revolution that made mediæval England modern, men's minds had been absorbed in politics and theology — in everything but literature; and now that a great gulf lay between the old world and the new, England found no ready means of expressing itself. Prose was too cumbrous and weighty for everyday use; poetry was still hesitating between an outworn and an untried fashion. The couplet, for which from the end of the last century the

Classicists had shown a special affinity,¹ was not as yet adopted into general use; blank verse had become the prey of far-fetched conceits, or had degenerated into a kind of bastard prose. Neither the fine elaborateness of the so-called metaphysical poets nor the splendid prose of an earlier period had any place in the cool and reasonable England of the Revolution, — an England that asked to express its thought only in a simple, direct, and flexible speech. The formation of a healthy national taste was, moreover, assailed from the very quarter whence help seemed to come; for, in the beginning, the influence of France, while stimulating activity, threatened our literary integrity. Not only was it dangerously allied with court and political life; the unhealthiness of English taste inevitably attracted it to the worst forms of French literature. Extravagant fashions had their counterpart in the extravagances of romance and sentimentality; if in France the Classicists found warrant for the perfecting of form, the example of France also encouraged conceits and prettiness. In such an age even the gain of distance from the Elizabethan writers, and a certain perspective in literary vision, could not save the new criticism from inconsistency, paradox, and contradiction. But paradox and inconsistency were of the letter, not of the spirit; in expression of opinion, not in change of principle. From Dryden's first word its character was defined, and the course of its later development was determined.

¹ Schipper: *Eng. Metrik*, II. 209.

(1667)
This
whose
inexperience
and the
mod-
esty of
the title,
takes us
to the
very
centre
of the
literary
consciousness
of the
day.
Not only
did its
dialogue
form
enable
him,
without
pedantry
or
partiality,
to
express
the
thought
of his
time
on
the
three
or
four
absorbing
questions
in the
world
of
letters;
it
was
admirably
suited
to his
own
temper
and the
inconclusiveness
of many
of his
opinions,
and
allowed
him
free
scope
for that
power
of
argument
which
he
exercised
more
successfully
and
prized
more
highly
than
is the
habit
of
poets.
The
account
of the
writing
that
he
gives
us
in his
preface
is
itself
indicative
of a
certain
disinterest-
edness
of
mind,
and
independence
of the
practical
spirit,
in the
poet
who
wrote
it.
London
was
in
1665
desolated
by
fire
and
plague,
and the
time
of
enforced
idleness
in the
country
he
gave
to its
composition,
being
engaged
the
while
"in these
kinds
of
thoughts
with
the
same
delight,
with
which
men
think
on
their
absent
mistresses."
2
Absorption
in the
theory
of his
art,
without
too
close
regard
to its
practice,
was
characteristic
of
Dryden.
Though
he
was
often
driven
to
justify
some
daring
literary
experiment,
and
though
practical
and
philosophical
motives
were
indis-
tinguishably
blended
in
many
of his
judgments,
he
yet,
from
first
to
last,
found
delight
in
purely

¹ *Essay on Satire*; *Works*, XIII. 5.

² *Ded. to Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, XV. 286.

speculative criticism. This speculative interest in literary principles was perhaps one reason for his indifference to consistency. Stiffness of opinion he called the effect of pride, not of philosophy;¹ and neither as poet nor as critic did he shun the contradictions and paradoxes that marked the advance towards a more fundamental and philosophic criticism.

The first question in discussion, naturally suggested by a reference to current poetry, is the well-worn comparison between the Ancients and the Moderns. The claims of the Ancients to rule and veneration are fairly stated, even though there be little warmth in the presentation. In their works they hand down to posterity a "perfect resemblance" of nature, and the laws of their art, the only rules by which poets at this day "practice the drama," were deduced from the observations of Aristotle on the poets who either lived before him or were his contemporaries.² Moreover, modern plays, judged even as to writing or structure by the standard of antiquity, are failures; for the Ancients lived in an age whose genius was the genius of artistic excellence. Further proof of their power, were it needed, could be found in the testimony of discriminating judges among Englishmen; Ben Jonson, the greatest man of the last age, was not only the most eminent interpreter, but "the learned plagiary" of all of them.³

contradictions

*
Ancients
Moderns

Ancients
claims

¹ Introd. to *Don Sebastian*; *Works*, VII. 302.

² *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, XV. 304.

³ *Ib.*, p. 309.

✱ Broad and moderate as is the answering plea for the Moderns, it seems from its gain in vivacity to express Dryden's sympathies, if not his opinions. The first claim for the supremacy of the Ancients is unreservedly granted; the Moderns have, indeed, profited by (their rules and works.) The second is as unreservedly denied; (a richer experience, a longer study of nature,) the very greatness of the Moderns in science and philosophy, throws on the partisans of the Ancients the burden of proof. Nor does he base his opinions on a belief in progress and the perfectibility of intellect alone; as a critic of their art, he declares that the Ancients
 ✓ were not consummate artists. The Greeks failed even in the regular division of their plays into acts; where and how the divisions came into the Roman drama was unknown.¹ Though the differing character of different periods is frequently used as an argument, there is in the essay no hint of the evolution of dramatic laws or of the development of various dramatic forms; the failure of the Ancients was that they had no one standard, no perfect type of excellence; it is the very spirit of Classicism that reproaches them not "because they have not five acts to every play, but because they have not confined themselves to one certain number."² Nor does this indictment of the dramatic principles of antiquity end the charge; there follows an arraignment of the threadbare plots and few characters of its plays, above all, of

¹ *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, XV. 311.

² *Ib.*, p. 313.

its poor and narrow imitation of nature — an imitation that was content to copy “only an eye or an hand, and did not dare to venture on the lines of a face, or the proportion of a body.”¹ The Ancients might be pardoned for breaking the unities, which were, after all, a French deduction from their principles; but they failed as well in instruction — which was throughout the discussion accepted as the highest end of poetry — by the constant reward of vice and punishment of virtue. Their language, too, was often forced, the pathos of their plays far below that of Shakespeare and Fletcher, and love, the most universal and moving of the passions, they ignored. Here, as Crites opportunely interrupted Eugenius, we may be sure that the partisans of the Moderns had finished their plea, though Dryden says nothing more decisive than that Eugenius seemed to have the better of the argument.²

The comparison between the Ancients and the Moderns was of European interest, and was to be the subject and stimulus of French criticism for at least two generations. But in England this question was already of the past, and Dryden's vital interest was always with the present and future. In the few words to the reader at the beginning of the *Essay*, he says that “the drift of the ensuing discourse was chiefly to vindicate the honour of our English writers from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them.”³ The

¹ *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, XV. 315.

² *Ib.*, p. 323.

³ *Ib.*, p. 292.

end of
argument

French-
↑
echo Ancients

question of the superiority of the French or English stage, and the subjection of the latter to French rules, was, indeed, a burning one to Englishmen, who saw in it one aspect of the struggle that threatened the political and social life of the nation. There is, in consequence, a perceptible intensifying of tone as we pass to the second division of the subject; and Dryden's attitude toward the Ancients is even more clearly seen in his treatment of the French than in what he has said of antiquity.

For the French are the successors and heirs of the Ancients, and are to be praised chiefly for following in their footsteps. Their conscientious observance of the unities, the variety given by their artistic use of history and fable, the effectiveness of their simple plots for the presentation of character, their skillful stage management, and the use of narratives to give simplicity and credibility of action — these excellences of the French stage are fairly, and even sympathetically, presented. Indeed, the reasonableness of French art and theory was so congenial to the Restoration thinkers that there is no attempt to refute the principles on which they rest; but these principles are rather supplemented by another and a higher law that gives equality, if not precedence, to the English stage. And this highest law was included in the very definition which is throughout accepted as the basis of discussion. Admit as the end of a play "a lively imitation of nature," and the French virtues are negative, the English positive; the one

can, at most, make the pleasant regular, "raise perfection higher where it is"; the other is rich in variety of plots, in contrast of moods, and, above all, in types of character — the humors of which the speaker would undertake to find more variety in a single play of Ben Jonson's than in all those of France.¹ It is this lively imitation of nature, and the pleasure that men find therein, that justifies the English plays in their mixture of mirth and seriousness, in their development of the action by secondary plots, and in their use of a variety of characters. This, too, makes him conclude that the tragi-comedy, invented, increased, and perfected by the English, is "a more pleasant way of writing for the stage than was ever known to the ancients or moderns of any nation."²

The speaker considers by the way the claim that the simple plots of the French plays give opportunity to express and work up the passions, but decides that this end is defeated by their tedious and depressing declamation. This characteristic — without a word of Seneca or the ancient drama — he lays to the charge of Cardinal Richelieu, and his attempt to reform the French stage into accordance with the gravity of a churchman. Finally, he condemns the French rules by the precept and example of their own poets. Not only was it true that of late years Molière, the younger Corneille, Quinault, and some others, had been imitating afar off the quick turns and graces of

¹ *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, XV. 337, 338.

² *Ib.*, p. 339.

the English stage,¹ but Corneille himself had demanded latitude in the interpretation of dramatic laws; and by his famous sentence, "it is easy for speculative persons to judge severely,"² the French rigidity is tried and found wanting. With this appeal the argument is closed; but the famous panegyric on Shakespeare, a brief criticism of Beaumont and Fletcher, and a careful examination of Jonson's *Silent Woman* — the masterpiece of Classic structure, the perfect type of regular and studied excellence — throws the weight overwhelmingly into the English side of the scale.

The use of the riming couplet, the outer and visible sign of the new Classic school, had throughout been assumed as the natural measure of a play; but the weightier matters being disposed of, the discussion is abruptly turned, by an attack of Crites on the new fashion, toward versification. This treatment of verse, which Dryden in his defense calls the weakest side of his argument, is interesting, not only as an attempt of the new school to give a reason for its metrical faith, but as a discussion on purely English ground. Crites, who is throughout the champion of the old, ignores the origin and history of the couplet as irrelevant, and declares that its use is not allowable in English plays. On the one hand, the public, to whose judgment all reasons must inevitably submit, were enamored of the measure of Shakespeare and Fletcher and Ben Jonson; on the other, rime is

¹ *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, XV. 337.

² *Ib.*, p. 346.

artificial in lofty passages, and unnatural in low ones. The prevalent idea that the couplet was a check to a too luxuriant fancy, is disproved by illustration; the liberty of blank verse never tempted Jonson to offend; the confinement of rime could not keep Corneille, like Jonson the most judicious poet of his nation, from "still varying the same sense an hundred ways."¹

The answer begins by one of those limitations of which the argumentative Dryden is so fond; rime is natural only "in serious plays, where the subject and characters are great and the plot unmixed with mirth."² But in these serious plays it is far more effective than blank verse; for its nice choosing and arrangement of words is, as it were, the perfecting of natural language, and it is the work of the drama to represent a noble and perfect nature. Against Aristotle's statement that the verse of the drama should be nearest prose, Dryden upholds the modern need of rime to balance the loss of quantity — a curious echo, if a feeble one, of the discussions of the century before. But after these doubtful arguments there is given the real reason for the use of rime: the genius of every age is different; and as the imitation of nature was the gift of the Elizabethans, so the perfecting of verse-form and language is the one way to greatness left open to their successors; the present time of doubt and perplexity is but the uncomfortable interval between the shaking off of

¹ *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, XV. 367.

² *Ib.*

an old habit and the formation of a new one. Then, after some formal replies to his opponent, and various technical directions for preserving variety and cadence in the use of the couplet, follows in a figure the metrical creed of the Classical school: "Judgment is indeed the master-workman in a play; but he requires many subordinate hands, many tools to his assistance. And verse I affirm to be one of these: it is a rule and line by which he keeps his building compact and even, which otherwise lawless imagination would raise either irregularly or loosely."¹

It was characteristic of the time that after the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, Dryden wrote almost no formal works of criticism, but gave his thought to the public in dedications and prefaces, even in prologues and epilogues. It is probable that his use of the preface had been influenced by Corneille's *Examens*, and the critical essays that in 1660 had been published with his collected works; but he also found a precedent in the example set by Sir William Davenant in 1651. The preface to *Gondibert*, the first in which an English author enunciated his theories of writing,—and as efficacious in its way as had been Davenant's innovations in rime and in the drama,—set the fashion for most of the criticism of the day. Dryden, however, in this, as in his other literary ventures, has the honor of making a passing fashion classic. Rambling in its nature² as the preface was, it became in

¹ *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, XV. 381.

² *Pref. to Fables*; *Works*, XI. 216.

his hands condensed, philosophic, artistic, — the prototype of the modern essay; it appealed to that growing class who asked of criticism sound sense and broad philosophy, and met the demand of society for ideas compact, pointed, ready for use at the play or in the *salon*.

But the influence of Dryden's age in shaping the form of his criticism was small compared to its influence on his style and thought. He himself tells us in the *Essay on Satire* that the authors of his day wrote no more for fame and to scholars, but only "for the pleasure of those gentlemen and ladies, who, though they are not scholars, are not ignorant: persons of understanding and good sense."¹ This writing for persons of sense rather than scholarship involved a loss as well as a gain to the new criticism; expression became direct and flexible, but thought was often narrowed and vulgarized by the avoidance of anything that might be considered pedantry. There is a touch of scorn in Dryden's judgment of "Dutch commentators,"² and he was accused — wrongfully, he tells us — of a contempt for the universities.³ But certain it is that even Puttenham — with all his antipathy to their "peevish affectation," and his regard, in enumerating rules, to the domestic happiness of "Ladies and Gentlewomen makers"⁴ — was not so susceptible as he to the new tone of court conversation, and to the quickening taste of the nobility

¹ *Essay on Satire*; *Works*, XIII. 115.

² Pref. on *Trans.*; *Works*, XII. 279.

³ Ded. to *Assignment*; *Works*, IV. 375.

⁴ Haslewood: *The Arte of English Poesie*, I. 120, 209.

and men of letters. His scorn of "stupid country souls"¹ is one sign of his affinity for the attempted refinement of court and society. The description of his intercourse with Sir Charles Sedley and his friends²—a picture likely enough touched by the imagination of a poet who knew so well how to dress and adorn nature—or his eulogy of the conversation of Charles's court,³ bears even less decisive testimony to the temper of his mind than does his disinterested estimate of the value to Horace of early intercourse with great men and of later familiarity with court life.⁴ Society was, indeed, setting before itself a new ideal, an ideal in which grace was blended with energy, and one of whose notes was the increased influence of women in literature.⁵ Dryden showed its influence in all his thought, but perhaps most plainly in his appreciation of a "well-mannered way" of speech, even though it were of "laughing a folly out of countenance."⁶

However Dryden was influenced as to the form of his thought or expression by the purely social demands of his age, his work was essentially at one with its broader and nobler interests. We have many proofs of his sympathy with the scientific movement of his day. He was one of the

¹ Ded. to *Amphitryon*; *Works*, VIII. 11.

² Ded. to *Assignment*; *Works*, IV. 372.

³ *Defence of Epilogue*; *Works*, IV. 241.

⁴ *Essay on Satire*; *Works*, XIII. 77, 78.

⁵ Beljame: *Le Public et les Hommes de Lettres en Angleterre*, Ch. II. § V.

⁶ *Essay on Satire*; *Works*, XIII. 108.

earliest members of the Royal Society; his writings are full of references to the science and philosophy of his time; he clearly recognized that the genius of his age was scientific. And if he did not fully realize the relationship of his work to the new movement, and that in this lay the sign and seal of its authority, he yet recognized in himself and in his method the spirit that pervaded it. It was this pervading spirit, this habit of mind, even more than any avowal of creed, that separated the new criticism from the old; by its attitude of doubt and scepticism—the determining little and taking nothing from antiquity on trust, which Dryden remarked as characteristic of the thought of his age¹—it ranged itself as one of the sciences. This spirit of scepticism was, indeed, always characteristic of Dryden's thought. It showed itself in his dislike for hasty conclusions, in his tendency to balance and alter those already made, in the difficulty with which he exchanged the attitude of questioner for that of dogmatist.² The conduct of the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* perfectly reflects this tone of thought. Evidence that Dryden was himself conscious of it is, moreover, not wanting; in the *Defence* he says: "My whole discourse was sceptical, according to that way of reasoning which was used by Socrates, Plato, and all the academies of old . . . and which is imitated by the modest disquisitions of the Royal Society."³

¹ *Defence of Epilogue*; *Works*, IV. 226.

² Pref. on *Trans.*; *Works*, XII. 273.

³ *Defence of Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, II. 307.

2 But not only was the new criticism leavened by the spirit of scepticism; its method was purely inductive and objective. Its insistence on a definite and reasonable excellence was softened by hardly an attempt after psychological analysis, and inevitably tended to a certain hardness of judgment; but the acceptance of nature as the constant standard of reference, and the source on which artist and critic were alike to draw, must in the end have rectified the temporary narrowness of its sympathies. From the beginning Dryden limited the scope of a poet's work only by the variety and breadth of nature. In 1667, he declared a just and lively imitation of human nature to be the first requisite of a drama;¹ in 1700, he says that the imitation of human life is the very definition of a poem.² It is by a constant appeal to nature that he limits the claims of authority and precedent, and accounts for differences that at first sight seem merely arbitrary. The study of nature is thus, in a broad sense, as essential to the poet as to the philosopher; as a poet, he tells us that he "cannot but have made some observations on mankind";³ the limitations of ancient criticism he explains by the narrowness of its data. The inference is inevitable: The artists of later days draw not after the lines of antiquity, but after those of nature,⁴ and in the imitation of

¹ *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, XV. 302.

² Pref. to *Fables*; *Works*, XI. 213.

³ Ded. to *Aureng-Zebe*; *Works*, V. 190.

⁴ *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, XV. 311.

an inexhaustible nature there is open to art a field of rich and infinite variety.

A less important result of the objective character of Dryden's thought, but one interesting both from the scientific and the psychological point of view, is his trial of every principle by practically testing it. He says that Lord Roscommon's *Essay on Translated Verse* had a large share in stimulating his zeal for translation, and prides himself on having "at least in some places made examples to his rules."¹ The making of examples to rules, as well as of rules to examples, would, indeed, seem to have been a motive power in Dryden's writing. His history as a dramatist is one long illustration of the ease with which he tried one literary form after another; and modified as his course was by the effort to write for his day and generation, there is yet an undeniable difference between his habit of mind and that of such artists as Jonson and Corneille.

Another point in which the new criticism was at one with the scientific movement, was its exceeding practicalness. Sound knowledge, the improvement of society — such were the fruits that criticism now asked of literature. This sense of the power of knowledge showed itself rather curiously in Dryden's esteem of learning in a poet. It was as masters of all "arts and sciences, all moral and natural philosophy,"² that he owed a large share of his allegiance to Homer and Shakespeare; he

¹ Pref. on *Trans.*; *Works*, XII. 264.

² *Essay on Satire*; *Works*, XIII. 6.

honored Chaucer in part that "learned in all sciences, . . . he speaks properly on all subjects."¹ But if he valued knowledge as a means, knowledge was also the end of his art, — knowledge, not theory, was the watchword of his criticism; he would have "no vain ideas," the products of barren speculation, "but a noble, vigorous, and practical philosophy."² His utmost ardor was called out by Sir Robert Howard's appeal to personal taste in his attack on Dryden's defense of rime. Fighting poorly in a good cause, Sir Robert had made personal judgment his umpire. In Dryden's spirited answer the reasoning, if ill-applied, was at least based on sound principles. Though to please be the aim of the poet, yet there is an excellence absolute and positive whether the poem please or not; taste may be fickle and uncertain, but good and bad are permanent in their nature, whatever their temporary success: "Were there neither judge, taste, nor opinions in the world," yet would there be the difference in nature, and positiveness in excellence; "that which is so in its own nature cannot be otherwise."³

But the attainment of knowledge as the end of criticism was much less constantly emphasized in Dryden's writing than was the obligation of literature to benefit society. In this sturdy moral sense he was thoroughly at one with his age, which, even in the excesses of the early Restoration, was busy

¹ Pref. to *Fables*; *Works*, XI. 219.

² Ded. to *Don Sebastian*; *Works*, VII. 302.

³ *Defence of Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, II. 302, 303.

with a practical and moral application of its theories. Hobbes, in his preface to *Gondibert* (1651), defines the position of the new school when, in comparing the poet to the philosopher, he says that his work is, "by imitating human life in delightful and measured lines, to avert men from vice, and incline them to virtuous and honorable actions."¹ With Dryden, though pleasure is the immediate object of poetry, instruction is its chief end, and this opinion, growing with his years and the intensifying moral tone of his age, is even more prominent in his later than in his early writings. Yet in all he varied but little. It was in 1693 that, seeking an ethical comparison between Horace and Juvenal, he gave as Horace's chief claim to favor that his satires are the most instructive "written in this art";² but in 1668 he declared moral truth the mistress of the poet, while, by coupling poet and philosopher, he indicated already the compass of his school.³

In spirit and method, Dryden brought the scientific thought of his time to bear on criticism; but other elements of his work, more conservative and temporary, were preëminently distinctive of the Gallic school. One of the most important of these was the assertion of the value of literary tradition, of the authority of that universal experience by which the individual literary conscience is to be enlightened and guided. This assertion

¹ *Works*, IV.

² Pref. on *Trans.*; *Works*, XII. 279.

³ *Defence of Essay of Dramatic Poesy*; *Works*, II. 303.

of a traditional standard of judgment was, of all Dryden's work, that most in unison with the average taste of his day, and that which his own age interpreted most narrowly. The increasing desire for simplicity and directness, indeed, made it inevitable that tradition should become authority, and that authority should rule with a rod of iron. Furthermore, Classic forms were so much more congenial to the new enthusiasm for law in literature, that from the first the balance was hardly kept by any but the greatest critics of the school. The average genius of the age was little susceptible to the beauties of earlier English writers, and could measure them by no other standard than the rule and line of the French or of the ancients. But in Dryden's position there are comparatively few traces of this narrowness. He uses the past to rectify the errors in his own judgment, as a fund of experience from which his limited knowledge may be enriched. Even in his boldest attack on his predecessors it is his aim to "ascribe to dead authors their just praises in those things wherein they have excelled us"; and he at least tries to be true to his own ideal of so maintaining his opinion of the present age, as not to be wanting in veneration for the past.¹ This deference to the past, this recognition of those authors to whom he "owed his lights," does more than fortify his reasoning and results; it raises the questions at issue into the larger world of cosmopolitan thought and interest.

¹ *Defence of Epilogue; Works*, IV. 225.

While Dryden's deference to the past accords perfectly with Classic canons, the emphasis that he laid on reason made him even more distinctively the founder of Classic criticism. Reason, the supreme judge, reason the guide and ruler of the imagination — this was the chief article of the school that took the couplet for its measure because of its reasonableness, of its power to curb too luxuriant an imagination. It is, perhaps, by more than mere coincidence, that in Dryden's defense of rime against the attack of Sir Robert Howard, we find one of his strongest pleas for the poet's need of reason. Sir Robert, following the popular belief, declared that it was not necessary for poets to reason closely, they being used to so great a latitude of the imagination that they "must infringe their own jurisdiction to profess themselves obliged to argue well."¹ To which Dryden briefly answers, "I am of opinion that they cannot be good poets, who are not accustomed to argue well."² Clear thought and honest understanding are, according to him, the essentials of just imagination, intelligent criticism, and refined aspiration. Bombast he calls "the delight of that audience which loves poetry, but understands it not";³ because he understood him better, he honored Ben Jonson more than could "little critics";⁴ again he says "though the fancy may be great and the words flowing, yet the soul is but half satisfied when

¹ *Introd. to Duke of Lerma.*

² *Defence of Essay of Dramatic Poesy; Works, II. 303.*

³ *Pref. to Troilus and Cressida; Works, VI. 280.*

⁴ *Ded. to Assiagnation; Works, IV. 375.*

there is not truth in the foundation." Even the power of lofty emotion is dependent on strong and sound understanding, — a conviction that moves the great Classic poet to declare that "such as cannot think can never love."¹

The most elementary form of the Classic zeal for rectitude and reasonableness was its devotion to language and versification; and to this movement Dryden gave an impulse, both by precept and example. His interest in verse already appeared in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, where his liking for Classic form was more clearly shown than justified. But his early poems were full of conceits and affectations; and the taste of his youth was indicated by Cowley's position in his affections. He describes his growth to a truer literary sense in the *Essay on Satire*, where he tells us that, almost twenty years before, the beauties of Waller and Denham, especially their exquisite "turns of words and thoughts," were first pointed out and recommended to his imitation.² Dryden had long known and admired these poets; but it was this hint that first made him sensible of his wants, and put him upon the critical study of English. From this time he not only recognized in himself the growth of a juster appreciation of language, but from it there may be traced a persistent and studied justification of his earlier bent towards Classicism.

About the time when, according to his own account, Dryden began critically to read Waller

¹ Prol. to *Cleomenes*.

² *Works*, XIII. 111.

and Denham, we find that justice and propriety of expression began to weigh much more heavily in his judgment of authors. The spirit of verbal correctness with which he had at last become possessed exposed him for a season to Scott's somewhat unjust accusation of irreverence toward his great predecessors. From the circumstances in which he wrote, the most striking illustration of Dryden's growth toward both a narrower Classicism and a more correct taste was shown in his strictures on the lawlessness and incorrectness of the Elizabethans and in his increasing severity to Cowley. What he censured in Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Ben Jonson — the latter he is "loath to name, because he is a most judicious writer"¹ — he laid to the fault of the time. The inequality of their writing and its solecisms and unrestrained conceits particularly offended him; especially did he find fault with Shakespeare and Fletcher, who were at once luxuriant in imagination and unrestrained by learning. That Shakespeare, "who many times had written better than any poet in any language,"² should deal so carelessly with his greatness was the crime of crimes to the critic Dryden. The trace of Euphuism and the love of conceits in his predecessors was perhaps more hateful to him in that he had sinned in like manner and in far worse fashion; but that there was reason in his charge is proved by even a superficial acquaintance with earlier literature. Dryden's generosity, too,

¹ *Defence of Epilogue*; *Works*, IV. 231.

² *Ib.*, p. 236.

constantly appears in the recognition of all that seems to him truly great. He never wearies of admiring Shakespeare's imitation of nature, though he never ceases to point out his sins of phrase and figure. Thus in the preface to *Troilus and Cressida* he within a few pages deprecates the possibility of imitating the "incomparable Shakespeare," and tells us that his style is "so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure."¹

The change wrought by a gradual alteration of taste in Dryden's judgment of Cowley is interesting both from his early reverence for the older poet, and because Cowley is so far from deified in our day that we can more truly see the relation between him and his critic. The darling of his youth, the author whose authority, he said in 1672, was almost sacred to him,² when tried by the new standard proved sadly deficient in elegant turns on the word and on the thought, and overburdened by "the points of wit and quirks of epigram" that were now become Dryden's aversion. Yet though he finds his idol's feet of clay, his fairness is not at fault. If there is wanting in Cowley "somewhat of the purity of English, somewhat of more equal thoughts, somewhat of sweetness in the numbers"³ — could the requirements of the Classic school be more compactly worded? — there is yet greatness and soul in his writing; though

¹ *Works*, VI. 255.

² *Essay on Heroic Plays*; *Works*, IV. 24.

³ Pref. on *Trans.*; *Works*, XII. 281.

he may no longer be esteemed a good writer, he must always be thought a great poet.

If Dryden, in his enthusiasm for smooth and equal language, tried authors by a new standard, he occupied himself as well with the study and the improvement of his mother-tongue. But here his prevalent tone of optimism was wont to change. He lamented the lack of an English prosodia, or even of a tolerable dictionary or grammar; and despaired either of government patronage, or of finding those who are able to refine the language.¹ The ill-sounding monosyllables of which our barbarous language afforded a wild plenty² were his bane. Disliking the natural harshness and perpetual ill-accent³ of French, he notwithstanding owned English far superior to it. Latin, to which in majesty it most nearly of the modern tongues approaches, he yet thought far above it.⁴ So keenly did he realize the mechanical difficulties of his task, that in language he found the great bar to a new and perfect work of art; the genius who might at any time arise and in other things equal even the greatest of the ancients, must yet, because of the language, fall short of their perfection.⁵

But in spite of his pessimism, Dryden never flagged, especially as his taste refined itself with study, in his efforts to enrich English "with the beauties of modern tongues, the elegances of the

¹ *Essay on Satire*; *Works*, XIII. 114.

² *Ib.*, p. 116.

³ *Pref. to Alb.*; *Works*, VII. 233.

⁴ *Pref. on Trans.*; *Works*, XII. 270.

⁵ *Essay on Satire*; *Works*, XIII. 15.

Latin," and "old words, which for their significance and sound deserve not to be antiquated."¹ And more fundamental than the adoption of the significant and sounding words to which his soul cleaved, than the beautiful turns of words and thoughts that he would have cultivated in and out of season, was the correctness that he never tired of emphasizing. That it was the first to observe its errors² is the commendation bestowed on his own age; and in speaking of a common fault in Ben Jonson — the preposition at the end of a sentence — he remarks that he had but lately observed it in his own writing.³ His contemporaries might not be great wits, but they could at least be good poets. Equality, correctness, smoothness of style, ought to be universal virtues. As good sense, good nature, candor, are the outcome of the best habits of mind, so literary tact, refinement, niceness of taste, are their æsthetic counterpart. Every thought, sentence, couplet was to be, as it were, the perfect work of art and nature, a diamond smoothed and set in gold.⁴ It was only by such a standard that Dryden ranked Waller with Virgil, and above Spenser; and low as the standard was, its application made possible the prose of the eighteenth and the poetry of the nineteenth centuries.

Dryden's sense of craftsmanship in literature is shown not only by his zeal for perfecting the

¹ Pref. to *Don Sebastian*; *Works*, VII. 309.

² *Defence of Epilogue*; *Works*, IV. 228.

³ *Ib.*, p. 232.

⁴ *Essay on Satire*; *Works*, XIII. 33.

language, but by his constant emphasis on the writer's need of skill and culture. The training that he prescribes for "the nice critic in his mother-tongue" would satisfy the most exacting of modern purists. It is, he says, impossible even for a good wit to understand and practice the delicacies and proprieties of English "without the help of a liberal education, long reading, and digesting of those few good authors we have amongst us, the knowledge of men and manners, and the freedom of habitudes and conversation with the best company of both sexes." And the understanding and critical discernment of pure English is in vain, unless one can not only distinguish good writers from bad, and a proper style from a corrupt, but what is pure in a good author from what is vicious and corrupt in him.¹ Dryden never lowers the critical standard of excellence. Often hasty and careless in his own writing, always emphasizing the necessity of gifts of nature, he yet dwells again and again on the need of effort and learning and skill. Jonson is his supreme authority because he wrote "knowingly," because he had not only mastered the wisdom of the ancients, but had learned of them the knowledge of his craft. Language was to be beautified and refined by elimination, by borrowing, by conversation, by the happy figures and turns with which Shakespeare and Fletcher, Suckling and Waller, had alike enriched it; it was never to be an untrained garden, growing in wild luxuriance. Nature was nature always,

¹ Pref. on *Trans.*; *Works*, XII. 265, 266.

but heightened, dressed, adorned. "A severe critic is the greatest help to a good wit,"¹ he says, and declares his willingness to suffer if only the art might be improved at his expense.² That he gives few practical precepts, such as those of Horace and Boileau and Pope, makes his teaching none the less positive or effective. His method, allying him to Aristotle rather than to any other of the great early critics, consisted in the establishment of principles rather than in the laying down of laws; and what he thus loses in point and epigram he gains in breadth and suggestiveness.

Two of Dryden's mental qualities especially influenced the development of his criticism. One was his catholic taste, the other a daring and ardor of mind that allied him to the Elizabethans. The literary critic of broad appreciation runs the risk of many mistakes; and Dryden was no exception to the rule. But the utmost refinement would hardly have served him in his own day as did his broad and sympathetic taste. Through it he won a hearty, if not always delicate appreciation of poets the most unlike, and of times the most diverse; and, in a period that was defining itself into a narrower and narrower Classicism, kept a living sense of the greatness and fellowship of the world of letters. It was hardly less efficacious in keeping him in touch with a world of life and fact,

¹ *Defence of Epilogue; Works*, IV. 230.

² *Pref. to Troilus and Cressida; Works*, VI. 259.

and thus constantly rectifying and broadening his growing fastidiousness. And even more potent than this catholicity of interest was his love of flight for flight's sake, and a rebellion against any but the mildest rule of law. There was hardly a phase of his intellectual life where this boldness did not show itself. In his literary affinities he had less liking for Virgil than for Homer, whose vehemence he found more suitable to his temper. In spite of his admiration of Horace's style, he preferred Juvenal's gallop to his amble,—the impetuosity and swiftness of Juvenal adding "a more lively agitation to the spirits."¹ He had but little sympathy with Lucan, who "walks soberly afoot, when he might fly,"² and felt an evident scorn for a tame hero "who never transgresses the bounds of moral virtue."³ He found pleasure, for a time at least, in the Romantic drama, because it "indulged him a further liberty of fancy, and of drawing all things as far above the ordinary proportion of the stage, as that is beyond the common words and actions of human life."⁴ He liked the same qualities in language. He loved a verse that is "roomy," where "the thought can turn itself with greater ease in a larger compass."⁵ Often, indeed, Dryden seemed to find more pleasure in breaking a law than in establishing it; he preferred for this once "to err

¹ *Essay on Satire*; *Works*, XIII. 85.

² *Essay on Heroic Plays*; *Works*, IV. 23.

³ *Ded. to Conquest of Granada*; *Works*, IV. 16.

⁴ *Essay on Heroic Plays*; *Works*, IV. 21.

⁵ *Essay on Satire*; *Works*, XIII. 109.

with honest Shakespeare,"¹ or satisfied his humor "to break a rule for the pleasure of variety."² His constant allowance for English love of variety and freedom was, in part, at least, due to his being a very thorough Englishman, and to the national habit of "following laws at a distance," which did much to save him from the pedantry and dogmatism of a narrow system.

In Dryden's work there culminated a century and a half of critical progress — through it the thought of an earlier England became a shaping force in the eighteenth century. It was, indeed, narrowly limited by the conditions of its age. The great critic of the Restoration was confronted by a corrupt popular taste, a broken literary tradition, and an unreasoning acceptance of foreign fashions that threatened England's integrity of imagination and intellect. But, hard as was his task, he had not to make bricks without straw. From the past he had received the elements of a sound critical system; the scientific spirit, which had underlain even the quibbling and pedantry of his predecessors, suddenly found itself in harmony with the dominating tone of English thought; the doubtful influence of France marked an important epoch in England's long effort to assimilate the foreign and to transcend a merely national ideal. A literature confronted by such immediate and perplexing questions as the fashioning of a vehicle of expres-

¹ *Vindication of Duke of Guise*; *Works*, VII. 163.

² *Ded. to Spanish Friar*; *Works*, VI. 409.

sion, the assertion of a standard of judgment, the maintenance of national integrity, could, in such an age, give no uncertain sound; a doubtful and wavering taste asked, above all, for a definite literary creed, and for order and simplicity in the world of the imagination. Criticism was, furthermore, driven to seek what justification it could in authority, to appeal from the imagination to reason, and to combat lawlessness in literature by reiterating the value of art. Deeper and more fundamental than these points, in which it touched the social need of the day, were those that made it a part of the scientific movement of the century, — its attitude of scepticism, its adoption of the inductive method, and its demand for sound knowledge and ethical gain. In adjusting itself to the demands both of Classic taste and scientific method, it could not but become lucid and definite, even if in the compromise between such opposing forces it lost something of logical and historical completeness. The strength of its clear and reasonable philosophy is revealed in the great literature whose principles it expounded; but though the glories of the Classicists are commonplaces of literary history, from the days of Dryden even their greatest writers did little but perfect and apply doctrines that had already been defined; the future lay with the widened knowledge and quickened sympathy that followed this perfecting, and with the imagination that was outlawed by a school so predominantly intellectual and reasonable.

II.

THE EVOLUTION OUT OF CLASSICISM.

ALMOST half a century before Dryden defined the principles of the Classicists, Bacon had sketched the outlines of a criticism liberal in spirit, philosophical and historic in method. Perhaps nowhere did the great philosopher trust more generously to posterity than in the few pages where he set forth the dignity and importance of the study of literature; for in his own age "the argument, the method of construction, and the use" according to which he would have it conducted might well be "set down as wanting."¹ The wonderful flowering of Elizabethan literature — that early union of mediævalism and classicism which gives an historic prototype for the marriage of Faust and Helena² — had, even while stimulating criticism, degraded its office and doubled its task. The verbal minuteness, the careful analogies, even the sound wisdom of this period, were hardly the beginning of that history of learning which was, in Bacon's eyes, essential both to historian and to philosopher, without which the history of the world seemed but as "the statue of Polyphemus without the eye, the very feature being left out which most marks the spirit and life of the person."³

¹ Trans. of *De Aug.*; *Works*, IV. 300.

² *Faust*, Theil II., Act III.

³ Trans. of *De Aug.*; *Works*, IV. 330.

But Bacon not only recognized the value of literature as the great record of human experience; by making the history of learning a part of his universal organon, and by dividing all literature into history, poetry, and philosophy, according to its dependence on memory, imagination, or reason,¹ he also suggested the historic and psychologic method of studying it. As to the compass of his great history of learning, he demanded that it contain everything relating to literary history, the record of the kinds and progress of the learning and art of all the times and regions of the world, and that, above all things, events be coupled with causes, that an account be given of the characters of the several regions and peoples, and of the influence on thought of accident, of religion, of the laws, and of individuals. All this, moreover, he would have handled in an historical way; merely personal judgments were, as far as possible, to be eliminated, and all emphasis was laid on knowledge of fact, and the tracing of relation between cause and effect.² If there was in this outline any sign of Bacon's over-belief in method as against the insight of genius, his love of knowledge at first hand and his poetic appreciation of the great works of the imagination saved him from the danger of the systematizer. The "matter and provision" of literary history he would have drawn, not from histories and commentaries alone, but from the great books of the

¹ Trans. of *De Aug.*; *Works*, IV. 292.

² *Ib.*, pp. 300 and 301.

world themselves, that so "the literary spirit of each age may be charmed as it were from the dead." Furthermore, this study was not to be a barren pleasure, the gratification of even a noble intellectual curiosity; the history of thought, resting on fact and illustrated by examples, was a storehouse of experience, to serve alike the cause of learning and of learned men.¹

Tried by Bacon's prophecy, the work of Dryden and his followers left much to ask. Its weakness was, indeed, but the defect of its strength, and resulted from the very conditions that first made any systematic criticism possible. Criticism is, from its nature, even more deeply influenced by circumstances than is the literature of the imagination. So far as it is personal and interpretative, so far as it depends on a sensitive temperament or on trained delicacy of perception, its conditions may be at one with those of the poetry and art of its age. But, even in this case, criticism is pre-eminently the literature of thought as distinct from the literature of feeling or imagination; and when, sooner or later, it supplements appreciation by systematic study, and turns to science or philosophy for an example of method, it is doubly penetrated with the spirit of the time. This two-fold dependence of critical thought on surrounding conditions is especially evident in a period like that following the English revolution, whose genius was the genius of large and simple ideas, and whose interest lay with masses rather than

¹ Trans. of *De Aug.*; *Works*, IV. 300, 301.



with individuals. Science, concerning itself chiefly with the laws of space, was winning its greatest triumphs in astronomy; philosophy, turning its eyes outward, was declaring with Spinoza an omnipotent pantheism, or with Locke a materialism less omnipotent only because as yet less logical; the contract theory of government was annihilating, even in asserting it, the freedom of the individual. In such an environment criticism was inevitably objective and general, inclined to deal with facts, and to ignore causes and complex relations. The history of thought and the psychological foundations of critical theory were as foreign to its interest as to that of contemporary science or philosophy.

The defects and the virtues of English Classicism had an almost equal share in defining the progress of the next century. Its characteristic excellences — the practicalness of its purpose, the definiteness of its thought, the lucidity of its expression — were quickly perfected. But even in the midst of the great Classicists there grew up a criticism at once antithetic and complementary to their teachings. According to the constant law of human progress, the new school was strong where its predecessor had been weak. The Classicists were content with the suggestion of a theory of æsthetics, the Romanticists brought everything into a system of philosophy. Dryden and his followers, conceiving of beauty as absolute and typical, hardly thought of the development of literature; their successors lost something of the artist's sense in

delight in infinite change and variety. The one put all but the tangible and perceptible outside the range of its interest; the other made imagination and sympathy the corner-stones alike of criticism and of art.

This apparent revolution in thought and purpose was only in part reactionary; in part it resulted naturally from the activity of the Classicists themselves. The eighteenth century first knew well what was near at hand, — the writers of the day, the literature of France, the long-established tradition of Rome; through absorption of the present and immediate it had to grow into sympathy with the distant and the foreign. But the critical activity that was everywhere conditioning the future was quiet and subtle in its working, and tended far more to the fulfillment of the Classic ideal than to oppose itself to the theories of the Classic school; it showed itself now in some illogical affinity of a leader among the Classicists, now in some significant protest of a younger poet, now in the growing accuracy of knowledge or broadening sympathy of the students of literature. From the first, moreover, the advance of the Classicists toward a less formal and Latinistic criticism was modified by the emotional Romanticism that began to possess Europe soon after the middle of the century. This spirit, which became evident early in the Classic period, is singularly hard to trace or to define. Not only were its beginnings obscure and inconspicuous; its service to thought was throughout negative rather than positive, lay rather in the

stimulus of the imagination than in the formulation of new intellectual conceptions. It was, moreover, everywhere characteristic of Romanticism that it reaped where it had not sown. The great movement toward cosmopolitanism that culminated about the beginning of our century, though appropriated by the Romanticists, was in reality the result of Classic activity, and was at once obscured and broadened by its later treatment. The love of nature that is in many ways so distinctively Romantic, grew out of the sturdier love of an earlier generation. From the stimulating intercourse between France and England that centred about the English Revolution and whose fruits are the glory of the Latin Renaissance, the century knew no pause in its advance toward a broadened knowledge and sympathy; and though the tracing of this liberal spirit is necessarily but a sketch, and must often vanish into a suggestion, its growth yet indicates, on the one hand, the best achievements of the school from which it sprang, and, on the other, the fairest possibilities of that future for which it was the preparation.

A restless curiosity, an absolute trust in reason and sound sense, a passion for humanity, — these were, in the first half of the eighteenth century, the common characteristics of the two great nations of Europe. In both France and England, long dominance of Latin modes of thought had borne fruit in the distinctively Classical virtues of love of law, logical severity of taste, and something of

a Roman power of organization. But this fundamental resemblance was disguised by differences that might easily seem the sign of a deeper antagonism. France, receiving not only its Classical tradition but its prose style from the great age of its literature, used its two-edged sword in behalf of rational freedom and against hypocrisy in high places ; England, with its more poetic inheritance, was driven to form a flexible and exact prose in the very act of diffusing knowledge through the ranks of the Philistines. Intellectual subtlety and zeal for freedom of thought often obscured the moral aim of France, while England was perhaps too ready to proclaim art and intellect but ministers to the social good. Yet whatever their external differences, the ethical enthusiasm of each nation did as much as the conservatism of a ruling party to uphold the power of Classic forms, and even to narrow the canons of Classic criticism. Not only were men's minds absorbed in greater matters than questions of style ; the compactness and energy of Classic expression made it the ready weapon of literature against the darkness of its day and generation. Under such circumstances it was natural that in both nations increased severity of theory should be accompanied by greater practical latitude and by a wider range of perceptions. The boasted achievements of the century — the formation of a reading public, the new influence of literature, the increased independence of men of letters — were hardly more significant signs of the time than the intensifying curiosity and enlarging

possibilities of the intellectual life itself; the awakening of new perceptions, the slow widening of the field of thought, were as potent in inspiration as the culture of the many into some degree of taste.

The interchange of thought between France and England in the eighteenth century vivified every phase of their intellectual experience. There was a large class of readers equally at home in the literature of London and Paris. The works of interest or importance published in England were immediately translated on the other side of the Channel, and Parisian journals made it their business to extend and multiply communications between the languages.¹ English periodicals not only imitated the style and discussed the manners of France, but sometimes depended wholly for popularity on the French play or romance that they were able to translate.² The interchange of philosophic and scientific thought was, moreover, as universal as this superficial community of literary taste. The English constitution fired French writers with a passion for liberty and an enlightened government; the English Deists furnished Voltaire his weapons of attack against the corruption of the state religion. Locke inspired alike the French materialistic philosophy, the theories of the Economists, and Rousseau's revolutionary ideas in politics and education. On the other hand, Adam Smith learned of the Economists;

¹ Brunetière: *L'Évolution des Genres*, I. 148.

² Gay: *Present State of Wit*; *Col. Pam.*, Vol. 979, p. 6.

Hume was as truly the successor of the French philosophers as of Locke; Godwin and Bentham carried on the tradition and perfected the methods of the great thinkers of the Enlightenment.

Yet it was a peculiar mark of this stimulating intercourse that, even in its philosophic borrowing, each nation sought in the other what was congenial to itself rather than what was characteristic of its neighbor. The century believed implicitly in an absolute standard of taste and knowledge, and, however the French and English might differ in defining it, they were at one in insisting on the supremacy of this standard and rejecting everything that did not square with its requirements. The French mind in the eighteenth century, says no less competent a judge than Brunetière, borrowed from the English only what it could assimilate, or, rather, only what resembled itself; it made no effort to understand its neighbor, or even to free itself from its own traditions and prejudices. It was long before, from its excursions through foreign literatures, it could bring back less self-confidence, a sympathetic curiosity for what was unlike itself, and the reasonable conviction that a passage of Aristotle or a verse of Boileau could not settle these larger disputes as to taste.¹ In the meantime, each nation remorselessly applied its accepted standard to the works of antiquity and of its contemporaries. "It could only be by long prejudice and the bigotry of learning that Milton could prefer the ancient tragedies,

¹ *L'Évolution des Genres*, I. 177, 178.

with their incumbrance of a chorus, to the exhibitions of the French and English stages," says Johnson, in the same essay in which he denies to Lycidas nature, truth, art, and novelty.¹ Pope, with a keener appreciation of the "light in antiquity," still allows the translator any liberties necessary to preserve the spirit of the original and to support the poetic style of the translation. Voltaire claims for the French stage the supremacy in naturalness over the Greek, and shows equal failure to understand any but the French drama when he calls Addison the Racine of England.² To him—in this, at least, the typical critic of his school—the taste of his country and of his age was the product of the refining power of centuries.

But even while magnifying the taste of their generation, the Classicists of England and France were furthering that sympathetic study of Greece and Asia and the Middle Ages, which must, in the end, have fulfilled and destroyed their narrow theories. They imposed upon their characters, it is true, a common idiom; but the common idiom mattered little when through it the most various thoughts began to make themselves understood. Though Pope's *Iliad*, the poetical wonder of its age, both "tuned the English tongue,"³ and formed a landmark in the modern independence of men of letters, it is hardly less important as marking the entrance of the Greeks into the general field of

¹ *Lives*, I. 167, 190.

² *Ancienne et Moderne Tragédie*; *Œuvres*, III. 376.

³ Johnson: *Lives*, III. 182.

English literature. "Voltaire's high-minded Scythians, generous Peruvians, and the rest" were one of the many influences that prepared the way for the curious cosmopolitanism, the striking eagerness to believe in the equal virtuousness and devotion inherent in human nature that colored the thought and action of the whole revolutionary period.¹ It is in Voltaire, indeed, of all the ante-Revolutionary critics, that we find the most perfect development of this cosmopolitan interest and the widest translation of foreign thought to his countrymen. A thorough knowledge of the English language and a careful study of its literature inspired in him but a very transitory indifference to the canons of French criticism. But though this episode of liberality changed into a new severity, it left its impress on both his temper and his sympathy. The incarnate spirit of that scientific century, he could yet count Milton as great a glory to England as Newton,² and could try, though in the narrow interpretation of *Zaire*, to bring something of Shakespeare home to France.

Voltaire's curiosity as to many peoples was strengthened and vivified by his study of history. The new historic spirit, which first found general expression in his works and in those of Montesquieu, was narrowly limited by the conditions of the age. Most of the past was worse than a blank to the historian before whom "the century of Louis XIV. stood like the angel at the garden of Eden

¹ John Morley: *Voltaire*, p. 139.

² *Sur la Poésie Épique*; *Œuvres*, X. 343.

and guarded the backward way to the paradise of the Middle Ages";¹ the thinker and man of taste who counted in the history of the world only the centuries of Pericles, of Augustus, of the Medici, and of Louis XIV. lost all sense of continuity and relation.² But the shifting of interest from the barren chronicle of events to the spirit that they moulded; the recognition that climate, laws, and race were factors in the development of humanity; the conception of the history of the nation as distinct from the biography of its rulers, were ideas not the less epoch-making that they waited long for full and logical development. A clear perception of the relations of the nations of Europe to each other, once, at least, made Voltaire almost prophetic. "If the nations of Europe," he says, "instead of unjustly despising each other, would give a less superficial attention to the works and manners of their neighbors, not to laugh at them, but to profit by them, perhaps from their mutual exchange of observations there would arise that general taste which we so vainly seek."³ It was a leader of an alien school of thought who, in a later age, perhaps did most to further this mutual knowledge. Answering a higher call, Voltaire turned from this glimpse of a promised land; but Madame de Staël, imbued with his liberal humanity and love of freedom, entered in and possessed it.

¹ Quinet: *L'Histoire de la Poésie*; *Œuvres*, IX. 362.

² Voltaire: *Siècle de Louis XIV.*; *Œuvres*, XX. 189.

³ *Essai sur la Poésie Épique*; *Œuvres*, X. 344.

There is evident, even in the height of English Classicism, a delight in the freedom of Greek and earlier English poetry utterly at variance with the formalism of the school. Johnson declared that he could not wish Milton's work other than it was, even though he must condemn it by the laws of criticism.¹ Pope, the very high-priest of English Classicism, accepts Classic standards only to ignore them at will. In and out of season he repeats his creed: there is one nature, one unerring standard of judgment; but though the good is emphatically in his eyes "one clear, unchanged, and universal light,"² he yet reiterates his liking for just those qualities that his theories outlaw. Voltaire consistently judged the *Æneid*, with all its faults, to be the most beautiful monument of antiquity,³ and, with the affinity of his age and school for sober and rational virtues, found the courage of Æneas "pleasing to sensible men."⁴ But Pope loved rather the rapture and fire of Homer "which carries the reader away with him, with that wonderful force that no man who has a true poetical spirit is master of himself while he reads him."⁵ Notwithstanding his many narrow and unworthy judgments of the greatest English poet, he yet finds Shakespeare the only author who proves "that the philosopher and even the man of the world, may be born, as well as the poet,"—perhaps higher

¹ *Lives*, I. 194.

² *Essay on Criticism*, l. 70.

³ Voltaire: *Essai sur la Poésie Épique*; *Œuvres*, X. 356.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 360.

⁵ *Letter to Trumbull*, Dec. 16, 1715.

recognition from the Augustan than the declaration that he is "not so much an Imitator as an Instrument of Nature," and "it is not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks through him."¹

The incipient interest in Greece and in the earlier English poets seemed at first to meet in appreciation of Milton. Embodying at once the Classical, the Hebrew, and the Calvinistic phases of the Renaissance, Milton appealed to the eighteenth century by the logic of his thought as well as by the music of his verse or by his exquisite sensitiveness to classical beauty. It was perhaps this wonderful union of seemingly discordant qualities that gave him his manifold power over the century of Atterbury and Addison, Gray and Burke. It was long before Cowper said of the music of *Paradise Lost*: "It is like that of a fine organ; has the fullest and deepest tones of majesty, with all the softness and elegance of the Dorian flute."² Atterbury, who, as Voltaire long ago pointed out,³ was even earlier than Addison in appreciation of Milton, was chiefly susceptible to his Greek beauty and simplicity of form. Though he longed to see the manuscript of Milton's poems and showed a deep admiration for *Samson Agonistes*, his unfashionable enthusiasm was colored by the narrow criticism of his age. *Samson Agonistes*, he said, was written in the very spirit of the ancients and was capable of

¹ Pref. to *Shakespeare*; *Works*, III.

² *Letter to Rev. William Unwin*, Oct. 31, 1779.

³ *Essai sur la Poésie Épique*; *Œuvres*, X. 405.

being improved with little trouble into a perfect model and standard of tragic poetry. The improvements necessary to reduce it to this standard he begged Pope to make, even while admitting the difficulty of its subject. That the story was taken from the Bible was "at that time of day" — in the full blaze of early Deism — an objection "not to be got over."¹

In Addison's discussion of Milton, the judgment of an author by an invariable standard has passed into sympathetic interpretation, but interpretation, on the other hand, has been driven to take refuge in authority. It is this union of liberality and conservatism that makes Addison so truly representative of the orthodox criticism of his century. His deference to Aristotle and his treatment in Aristotelian fashion of fable and characters, sentiment and language, lay an emphasis before wanting on the authority and method of the ancients. But in spirit his criticism tends away from this formalism toward sympathy with beauties unrecognized by his critical theories. There is often, indeed, in his interpretation of literature a freedom that reminds us of Lessing, a touch of that appreciative spiritual understanding which made the great critic of the century larger than any creed. Addison was like Lessing, too, in uniting the gifts of the born critic with interest in the broader life of the day. In his study of literature this showed itself most plainly through his application of the principles of the new philosophy,

¹ *Letter to Mr. Pope, June 15, 1722.*

and his sense that a critic's work should, in the main, follow its methods. There was nothing new, it may be, in his requirement that the critic should be versed in ancient and modern theories of his art, or that he study especially the Greek and Latin poets, or that he be as thoroughly grounded in logic as are the students of other sciences and speculations. But this sound advice he made practical and timely by the recommendation that the critic read the *Essay on the Human Understanding*. There was the tone of an experiential philosopher in his waiving of fruitless discussions of general terms;¹ in the statement—though it only reiterated the doctrine of his school—that Aristotle himself would have been a surer critic had he been happy enough to read the *Æneid*;² and, above all, in his truth to fact and experience, even when they fall outside the limits of a theory. That he made a single poem the centre of study, and brought all the resources of criticism to bear on its elucidation, marked an advance in general culture as well as in critical method since the time of Dryden. There is the reflection of the age, inevitable in one who lived so closely in touch with it, in the blemishes that he finds in Milton. He objects to Milton's parade of learning, is offended by his expressions on free will and predestination, and his many glances upon history, astronomy, geography, and the like;³ and finds him, in company with Æschylus and Sophocles, Claudian and Statius, Shakespeare and Lee, guilty

¹ *Spectator*, No. 267. ² *Ib.*, No. 273. ³ *Ib.*, No. 297.

of occasional commonnesses.¹ But these sins of narrowness hardly affect the real exquisiteness of his taste, and its liberality shows itself in discriminating admiration of Milton's genius, and in his delicate perception of the beauties of *Paradise Lost*.

The many-sided interest of Addison and the vigorous critics of his age shows itself in their quick appropriation of the tentative theory of æsthetics offered them by philosophy. Bacon had already hinted at the metaphysical foundations of criticism in his division of literature into classes according to the faculties of which they were the products ;² in Hobbes there are profound and suggestive references to the psychological relation of thought and literature ; and from the days of Addison and Shaftesbury the discussion had become a part of general literary criticism as well as a problem of the schools. But in spite of this philosophic and literary activity, the limitations of the age appear nowhere more conspicuous than in the range of English æsthetic speculation. The very qualities that were the strength of eighteenth century thought unfitted it to deal with problems so intricate and complex : the practicalness of its purposes absorbed its energy and hindered its speculative freedom ; its love of generalization inclined it to contemplation of the common principles underlying the arts rather than to the analysis of their essential differ-

¹ *Spectator*, No. 285.

² Trans. of *De Aug.* ; *Works*, IV. 292.

ences. Moreover, the lack of a historic conception of literature and the meagreness of existing critical material deprived philosophy of the data that could make its conclusions of permanent value. Another and even more serious difficulty lay in the popularizing of the discussion, and the consequent attempt to consider literature and art in their social and ethical bearings rather than in their own nature. Hogarth, speaking from the artist's point of view, said that the determination of a standard of beauty had been influenced for evil by the part taken in the discussion by men of letters, who, because of technical ignorance, were soon driven into "the broad and more beaten track of moral beauty."¹ In literary as well as artistic matters the ethical ideal of the century was too often the easy refuge of ignorance and incompetence, the watchword of workmen who were not masters of their craft. But though this too general treatment of æsthetic questions was thus further confused by the vague definitions of a hazy and enthusiastic utilitarianism, the influence of men of letters on the discussion at least insured its definiteness and practicality, and widened the common interest of literature and philosophy in the operations and works of the imagination.

The benefits accruing to æsthetic discussion from the intrusion of a great man of letters on what is more properly the domain of philosophy are perhaps most conspicuous in the case of Addison, whose treatment of wit and the imagination,

¹ *Analysis of Beauty* (1753).

while thoroughly philosophic in spirit, avoids all vague and unfruitful theorizing. The papers on Wit¹ are of comparatively little value; but those on the Imagination,² in which the imaginative faculties are discussed after the method of Locke's philosophy, are of singular interest. Johnson remarked both series of essays as founding art on the basis of nature, and drawing the principles of invention from dispositions inherent in the mind of man;³ and though there is in them no enunciation of a formal system, and though the style is familiar, as befits the *Spectator*, they are written in the spirit of the experiential philosophy. The discussion rests throughout on the thought that the senses are the source of all knowledge, and that sight, the noblest of the senses, furnishes the imagination with its ideas.⁴ Addison shows himself the true heir of Bacon when he defines the province of his criticism; though "everything that is great, new, or beautiful is apt to affect the imagination with pleasure,"⁵ it is impossible "to assign the necessary cause of this pleasure, because we know neither the nature of an idea nor the substance of a human soul, which might help us to discover the conformity or the disagreeableness of the one to the other." For want of such light criticism has only to reflect on those operations of the soul that are most agreeable, and to arrange under their proper heads what is pleasing or un-

¹ *Spectator*, Nos. 58, 60, 62, 63.

² *Ib.*, Nos. 411-421.

³ *Lives*, II. 153.

⁴ *Spectator*, No. 411.

⁵ *Ib.*, No. 413.

pleasing to the mind, without tracing the necessary and efficient causes of pleasure or displeasure. The limitation of his criticism to the practical and demonstrable is leavened by a strain of delight in the workings of the imagination, and by a truly English preference for the beauties of nature over those of art; dependent as each must be on the other, he yet finds "something more bold and masterly in the rough careless strokes of nature, than in the nice touches and embellishments of art."¹ This turn of mind makes him, even in that orderly age, realize the value to the imagination of the great and sublime, of a "vast uncultivated desert, of huge heaps of mountains, high rocks or precipices, or a wide expanse of waters."² "Our imagination," he says, "loves to be filled with an object or to grasp at anything that is too big for its capacity."² And again: "Such wide and undetermined prospects are as pleasing to the fancy as the speculations of eternity or infinitude are to the understanding."² Perhaps this love of the vast and great in nature did as much as his artist's sense to save him from accepting utility as the highest end of art; in that practical age he took his stand on safe and neutral ground, when he declared himself "of opinion that no just heroic poem ever was or can be made, from whence one great moral may not be drawn."³

The identification of the æsthetic and ethical which characterized the thought of the age, and

¹ *Spectator*, No. 414.

² *Ib.*, No. 412.

³ *Ib.*, No. 369.

from which even Addison barely escaped, is typically seen in the writings of his contemporary, Lord Shaftesbury. Among Shaftesbury's various interests, literature held a large place, and the half-formulated æsthetic problems of the day especially invited that semi-philosophical, semi-artistic reflection in which he delighted. In spite of his uncouth style and the shallowness of his Deistic philosophy, he bore a large part in transmitting the ideas of the English Revolution to the great thinkers of Europe. His influence told, indeed, more directly and powerfully on France and Germany than on his own countrymen, perhaps because his spirit was most truly akin to that of the leaders of the Enlightenment. The much chaff, mingled with the wheat of his thought, hardly lessened its value in the eyes of his contemporaries. Shaftesbury's insistence on the value of free thought and discussion, limited as the freedom was to the liberty of the club, to friends, and to gentlemen,¹ accorded far better with the keen-witted spirit of his age than Milton's loftier plea. He was of his own time in accepting ridicule as a supreme test of truth,² and in maintaining that even in religious matters "*to judg the Spirits whether they are of God, we must antecedently judg our own Spirit; whether it be of Reason and sound Sense.*"³ The religion that Shaftesbury upholds, in thought if not in words, was the social morality that was coming to take the place of an earlier spiritual aspiration. In the *Letter concerning En-*

¹ *Characteristics*, I. 51.² *Ib.*, p. 97.³ *Ib.*, p. 37.

thusiasm he says: "To love the Publick, to study universal Good, and to promote the Interest of the whole World, as far as lies within our power, is surely the Height of Goodness, and makes that Temper which we call *Divine*." ¹ This social enthusiasm touched an age whose noblest passion was the passion for social enlightenment, and whose deepest religion was the religion of good government. ²

Shaftesbury was as aristocratic as any thinker of his school in his scorn of judging truth by popularity, and in his belief that grace of action and nobility of conduct are the fruits of a liberal culture. Yet bringing the utilitarian ideas that guided his discussion of enthusiasm or the right of free speech to bear on his judgments of literature, he consistently declared the identity of truth and beauty, ³ and gave to art almost the same field as to ethics and philosophy. Knavery he called "mere dissonance and disproportion." ⁴ History, like poetry and painting and sculpture, was a part of moral truth, and to judge either of art or morality required as well ability to judge of the other. "'Tis a due Sentiment of MORALS," he says, "which alone can make us knowing in Order and Proportion; and give us the just Tone and Measure of human Passion." ⁵ This "one sentiment of morals" tempered the harshness of Shaftesbury's own literary judgments, — though

¹ *Characteristics*, I. 25.

² J. Morley: *Turgot; Miscellanies*, I. 199.

³ *Characteristics*, I. 141. ⁴ *Ib.*, p. 99. ⁵ *Ib.*, p. 188.

it did not keep him from condemning the didactic or preceptive manner of his contemporaries,¹ and though his taste is, for the most part, narrow even in that age of narrowness. When Addison was calling his readers to the perusal of *Chevy Chase*, he could point his condemnation with, "it is apter to tire us, than the Metre of an old Ballad."¹ In Pope's comparison of Shakespeare and the moderns to "an ancient majestic piece of Gothic architecture"² compared with a neat modern building, there is foreshadowed the later love of a mysterious and complex art. With Shaftesbury, on the other hand, Gothic was but a synonym for barbarous. Yet, true to his philosophy, he could forget the offenses of either Shakespeare or Milton for the sake of his noble morality. In spite of Shakespeare's deficiency in almost all the qualities that he would have a great writer possess, he yet admires him not only for his beautiful descriptions and the naturalness of his characters, but, above all, for the justness of his morality; in the moral genius of the English drama and epic, Shaftesbury recognizes its real claim to greatness.³

Crude as were the æsthetic theories of Addison and Shaftesbury, they became a vital part of the thought of their century; but there is no such relation between literature and the æsthetic speculations of later philosophers. The orthodox critics paid, indeed, but little attention to metaphysics;

¹ *Characteristics*, I. 175.

² Pref. to *Shakespeare*, III.

³ *Characteristics*, I. 186, 187.

the protestants against their authority were not ready for theory till they had more clearly defined their purpose; the speculations of the experiential philosophers hardly touched either the one or the other. From the artist's point of view, Hogarth and Reynolds gave valuable suggestions for the understanding of the nature of beauty. Burke's *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful* won both the praise and the condemnation of Kant.¹ Hume and Hartley brought æsthetics into line for further development. But Burke, who repudiated the sceptical philosophy in behalf of observation and common sense, and Shaftesbury, who averred that a good poet and an honest historian might afford learning enough for a gentleman,² were not more superficial in the eyes of the critical philosophers than the experiential metaphysicians themselves. Even our own age, which shows such increasing sympathy with the spirit of the eighteenth century, has hardly felt the influence of its æsthetic speculation. But it is still a question whether their external and objective method, enriched by the fuller psychological knowledge of our day, is not the best refuge from the unpracticality and confusion of present æsthetic theory.

Nowhere did the progressive criticism of the century more rapidly gain the power "to see the object as in itself it really is" than in the growing knowledge and love of Greek literature.

¹ *Kritik of Judg.*, p. 147.

² *Characteristics*, I. 82.

There seemed at first an impassable gulf between the higher Greek scholarship that sprang into life at the touch of Bentley, and the genericalness and vagueness of the popular appreciation of Greek literature. Bentley's famous comment on Pope's *Iliad* — a fine book, but do not call it Homer — is less interesting as marking a contact purely casual and personal, than as showing how scholarship lay ready to the hand of criticism, and how quickly and surely — if a little gruffly withal — it anticipated the verdict of the future. Bentley's influence on the study of the classics, though epoch-making in the long line of humanistic development, hardly touched his own age, with whose interest it was at best but superficially and unworthily connected. His best known, and perhaps his most characteristic work, *The Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris* (1797-9), was called forth by the pettiest of personal misunderstandings; and in its general and literary relations belongs to the few volumes — Temple's *Essay on the Ancients and Moderns* (1692), Wotton's *Reflections on Ancient and Modern Learning* (1694), and Swift's *Battle of the Books* (1704) — written in England in behalf either of Ancients or Moderns. The question of the authority of the *Letters of Phalaris* was one little likely to trouble the gentleman-like scholars of that time, who, in the enjoyment of their fine rhetoric, cared little whether the letters were written by the tyrant of Syracuse or were a clever forgery of later days. Bentley's greatness, however, lay not in establishing the immediate con-

clusion, but in the fact that his treatise "disclosed that broad and massive structure of learning upon which his conclusion rested,"¹ and that in accepting the tradition of humanistic learning he enriched it with a new method and a new power. It was the work of Scaliger's great successor to complete his historic survey of antiquity by the textual study of ancient writers, and to show the need of interpreting each detail of classic literature by the fullest and most perfect scholarship. For this end Bentley spent much of the leisure of his busy life in the editing of classic texts. He also found time to undertake, though never to complete, "an edition of the Greek Testament exactly as it was in the best exemplars at the time of the Council of Nice."² It is perhaps not strange that in his own day an activity so many-sided and revolutionary reached few, even among scholars. But though the majority were content to prefer the style and taste of his opponents, the few who understood soon began the transmission of his influence to that smaller public whose verdict in the end is law. Germany, in the intense intellectual activity of the last century, felt to the full his stimulus to verbal and historical and literary criticism; and Wolf and Niebuhr and the German classical philologists testify to the integrity and vitality of his influence.

Bentley stood at the dividing of the ways of Greek and Latin scholarship, and it was natural that, with the growing interest in Greece, his

¹ Jebb: *Bentley*, p. 72.

² *Ib.*, p. 162.

influence should tell first on the study of the less familiar language. The gradual turning of the moderns toward the freer life of Greece seems the result of subtle sympathies and attractions deeper than any apparent physical and intellectual causes. It was, doubtless, largely due to the growing accuracy of scholarship, and to the quickening intellectual curiosity of the times, and was certainly stimulated by the journeys to the East that increased rapidly after the middle of the seventeenth century, and seem, in some degree, to have taken the place of the earlier voyages of adventure. England was slow to share the interest in art and antiquity that resulted from this fresh knowledge of the ancient world; when she began to take an active part in the movement, Greece was already becoming recognized as the centre of classical research, and the divergence between the partisans of Greece and Rome was already clearly marked. A book of great interest in this new departure of criticism was Spence's *Polymetis, an inquiry in dialogue form into the agreement between the works of the Roman Poets and the remains of Antique Art* (1747). It was natural that the friend of Pope should turn to Rome and the Roman poets for knowledge of antiquity. Spence tells us, moreover, that this limitation "was of great use in making the whole work less perplexed"; and his objects—to learn the thoughts and practices of the Romans from the Romans themselves, and to take out some of the sullenness and severity that had gradually been thrown

over the studies of criticism and antiquity¹ — are worthy of a disciple of the Enlightenment. But Gray's comment, made in the very year in which *Polymetis* was published, shows the attitude of the more modern spirit. Spence's fault, according to him, lay in neglecting the Greeks, who "could have given him more instruction on the very heads he professed to treat than all the others put together."² Gray's wide knowledge of history and his fine classical scholarship — do we not hear an echo of Bentley in his demand for the *best editions* of classic authors as the foundation of a library? — were joined with an intuition of the value of original types and primary sources of culture. He thus not only agrees with the author, who has himself modestly described his book as a beginning rather than a perfect work, but declares it, besides, "a beginning at the wrong end." Nor did Gray rest content with merely negative criticism. We find him in 1761 interested in Stillingfleet's plan to send persons to reside in Athens and make themselves acquainted with the climate, productions, and natural history of the country, to the end that at last "we may understand Aristotle, Theophrastus, etc., who have been heathen Greek to us for so many centuries."³ Stuart's *Antiquities of Athens* (1762-76-94), and Wood's *Essay on the Genius of Homer* (1771), which was translated into French, German, Italian, and Spanish, were

¹ Pref. to *Polymetis*, IV. and V.

² *Letter to Horace Walpole*, 1747.

³ *Letter to Thomas Wharton*, January 31, 1761.

perhaps the most famous of the English books that at this time attempted a study of Greece. In France, the activity, centring about the work of Caylus and the Academy of Inscriptions, was greater and more methodic, and has besides been far more carefully investigated. And even while England and France were searching for what they only half divined, Winckelmann at Rome, consistently applying the historic method of art, had not only won for Europe new knowledge, but had laid open a new sense for the study of art, had initiated a new organ for the human spirit.¹

Greek scholarship, Greek art and archæology, were to find their full influence only in the thought of the next century ; literature was long strangely conservative toward these progressive movements. But the change toward a truer knowledge of antiquity may be easily seen in the theory and habit of translation. Even to the appreciative spirits of the Augustan age, Greece was but a larger and an older Rome ; if Homer was to them the mirror of the ancient world,² they yet found in that ancient world men very like themselves. The intellectual kinship of the time was with the Augustan age of Rome, or at best with the large philosophic spirit of Aristotle. Pope's *Iliad*, the most brilliant single illustration of its century's interpretation of antiquity, was remarkable for the absence of Homeric feeling. Johnson, carrying on the stricter classical tradition, seemed to

¹ Pater : *Renaissance*, p. 198.

² Pref. to *Iliad* ; *Works*, III.

think elegance and dignity more essential virtues of translation than fidelity. In reference to the Ovidian graces, "not suitable to his character," that were charged against Pope's *Homer*, he says that "to have added can be no great crime, if nothing be taken away."¹ But even Johnson — though perhaps with a touch of the censor toward his great predecessor — accused Addison's translations of wanting "the exactness of a scholar," and being too "licentiously paraphrastical" to convey to others the author's meaning.² The very moderate literalness demanded by Johnson was, however, soon far from satisfying the younger poets, whose faces were set towards the future. Cowper, in the preface to his translation of the *Iliad* (1791), asserts absolute and uncompromising fidelity to the author's meaning to be a translator's first duty. His allegiance to Pope as an original poet is unwavering; he had, says Cowper, "with the unwearied application of a plodding Flemish painter . . . all the genius of one of the first masters."³ Yet, notwithstanding these excellences, Cowper thought it possible to follow him with advantage in the humble capacity of translator, and assures the reader that at least "the matter found in me, whether he like it or not, is found also in Homer, and that the matter not found in me, how much soever he may admire it, is found only in Mr. Pope."⁴ Time has condemned the harsh

¹ *Lives*, III. 183.

² *Ib.*, II. 150.

³ *Letter to Rev. William Unwin*, January 5, 1782.

⁴ *Pref. to Homer; Works*, XI. viii.

fidelity of Cowper's translation, and approved the brilliancy of Pope's wonderful poem. But if the work of the great artist deserves its immortality, the student of literary history finds hardly less interest in the changed attitude of mind, and the rugged and halting verse, of the lesser poet.

The new poetic spirit that prompted Cowper's poetic fidelity in studying the Greeks, or inspired his definition of a translator's duties, pervades all his critical utterances. Not only does he deny to Pope's *Iliad* any trace of Homer's spirit or manner,¹ but he calls Milton to witness that no subject, however important or sublime, is beyond the compass of the English language.² Homer and Milton are appealed to against the perpetual brilliancy of the Classic poetry; the rough places in their poems are commended as better than a wearisome monotony even of excellence.³ But though Cowper accepts as truly poetical the passages in Homer that are plain and unelevated, he is yet far from Wordsworth's insistence on identity of language in poetry and prose, and frankly admits it to be "difficult, without sinking below the language of poetry, to harness mules to a wagon, particularizing every article of their furniture, straps, rings, staples, and even the tying of the knot that kept all together."⁴ His defense of the "creeping passages" of the elder poets, which is none the less

¹ *Letter to Rev. John Newton*, December 3, 1785.

² Pref. to *Homer*; *Works*, XI. xi.

³ *Ib.*, p. xii.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. xvii.

valiant that he sees the difficulties in the way, is accompanied with a pronounced change of metrical principles. Cowper not only declares a just translation of any ancient poet in rime impossible; but to be poetical without rime he calls "the argument of a sound and classical constitution in any language."¹ As is natural, he sends the impugner of blank verse,² "the English *heroic*,"³ to learn of Milton, whose music had a special charm for the finer spirits of his day. It is, too, with a consciousness of spiritual kinship that he remarks "the unacquaintedness of modern ears with the divine harmony of Milton's numbers, and the principles upon which he wrote."⁴ There is evidence in high places of Gray's charge that the many did not understand Shakespeare and Milton, though obliged by fashion to admire them. Doctor Johnson made it the corner-stone of his study of *Samson Agonistes* to decide whether it was "composed according to the indispensable laws of *Aristotelian* criticism," and, especially, to examine whether it exhibited a beginning, a middle, and an end.⁵ But the great orthodox critic, though he set before himself no other purpose than by this analysis to promote the knowledge of true criticism,⁶ yet declared that his strictures could but strengthen Milton's laurels by lopping their too luxuriant shoots; and the generous delight in Milton's greatness that miti-

¹ Pref. to *Homer*; *Works*, XI. vii., xv.

² *Ib.*, p. xi.

³ *Letter to Rev. Walter Bagot*, February 26, 1791.

⁴ *Ib.*, August 31, 1786.

⁵ *Rambler*, No. 139.

⁶ *Ib.*, No. 140.

gated the philistinism of Johnson's judgments was growing, in the younger and more modern spirits, into sympathetic appreciation of the great poet.

In an interesting passage of the *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge remarks that in his opinion the stress laid in the public schools on the writing of Latin verse was one great cause of the popularity of the English Classic poets.¹ Whatever the value of his observation, it is certain that a more liberal taste in poetry was early accompanied by a new sensitiveness to the powers of our language, and a new emphasis on its study. This interest was, no doubt, rooted in the earlier strivings after grammars and dictionaries, and in the academic spirit that inspired Swift's *Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Language* (1712); but it had been stimulated during the century by the higher classical scholarship, by the advance toward a sounder historic method, and by the longer culture of literary taste. The idea of a scientific study of English had, indeed, as yet, hardly defined itself; but the future was already foreshadowed in the appreciation of the early poets and in the emphasis laid on practical training in the mother-tongue. This zeal for culture of expression naturally showed itself chiefly among the liberal spirits who occupied the border-land between Classicism and Romanticism, and who were forced by the very accuracy of their training to challenge the claims of authority in phrase or image. Cowper, especially,

¹ *Works*, III. 156.

protested vigorously against the carelessness of his day, declaring again and again the impossibility of good writing without attention and study, and blaming all the public schools he ever heard of "for the folly of supposing that the mother-tongue, in some respects the most difficult of all tongues, may be acquired without a teacher."¹ The attempt of Bowyer to remove the reproach of the masters showed more conclusively the advance of conservative thinkers toward a careful study of language. Though Latin still held its ground in Christ's Hospital, Greek was at least equal in dignity and importance; and the teaching of English, as minute and thorough as that of the classics, not only aimed to show the logic and inevitableness of the great English poets, but gave the severest training in literal and accurate expression.²

Study of the language was naturally slower in development and influence than study of the early literature of England. From the days when Addison called — or recalled — attention to the English ballads,³ and when Pope and Gay yielded to the charm of Spenser, there was no pause in this interest or in its growth toward directness and simplicity. In examining *Chevy Chase*, Addison tried the ballad by the standard of the heroic poem, and compared it with what he called the Gothic writing of Martial and Cowley; the influence of Spenser on Pope and Gay is to be traced, not in any deep impress on style or spirit, but in scattered

¹ *Letter to Rev. William Unwin*, October 5, 1780.

² Coleridge: *Works*, III. 146.

³ *Spectator*, No. 70.

lines and images of the pastorals, the nature-poetry of an artificial age. Years later, Johnson, speaking in the *Rambler* of the general imitation of Spenser among men of learning and genius as likely to gain on the age, commended the imitation of fiction and allegory while disapproving that of diction and stanza.¹ A striking instance, and an early one, of the growing integrity of poetic study is shown in Pope's severity to Dryden and Oldham for passing judgment on *Gorboduc* when they had not read the play; "it is truly," he says, "a scandal, that men should write with contempt of a piece which they never once saw."² This judgment of Pope's, and Spence's edition of the tragedy in 1736, were a natural outgrowth of the spirit and principles of the Classicists. With their honest and verbal methods care for textual criticism followed inevitably on the growing accuracy of their knowledge. There is an interesting illustration of this in Johnson's *Life of Pope*, where the great writer, with the scholar's delight in verbal processes, gives the history of Pope's translation of the *Iliad*, and several pages of the text as an example of the first draught. "Of these specimens," he says, "every man who has cultivated poetry, or who delights to trace the mind from the rudeness of its first conceptions to the elegance of its last, will naturally desire a greater number"; but a Classicist seldom forgot his social duty, and Johnson turned from quotation because,

¹ *Rambler*, No. 121.

² *Letter to Hon. Robert Digby*, June 2, 1717.

interesting as it must be to his peers, most other readers were already tired, and he was not writing only to poets and philosophers.¹

The growing interest in the past that underlay this increasing fidelity of study was intensely stimulated soon after the middle of the century by two of its significant books. The *Poems of Ossian* (1760–63) and Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), though embodying widely different phases of the universal interest in the past, stirred, each in its own way, the imagination of the younger poets of Europe; the Percy ballads tuned their hearts to the music and simplicity of their national songs, while the shadowy forms and brooding melancholy of Ossian seemed a part of the spirit that they evoked. The divergent character of the books largely determined even their national influence. England, which in the Romantic period kept something of her sturdy naturalism and sound sense, responded to the call of Percy; Germany, in touch at every point with the new poetry, was at least as deeply moved by the visions of *Ossian*. Whatever their limitations, *Ossian* and the *Reliques* shared in the suggestiveness and germinal potency of the best English thought of their century, and thus influenced European Romanticism hardly less than that of their own country. From them England was to receive a second impulse, and an impulse even stronger than the first, through Bürger's *Lenore*, through *Die Räuber* and *Werther*,—indeed, through the whole Romance-tinged literature of Germany.

¹ *Lives*, III. 99.

The liberal Classical criticism that grew up in the midst of this interest in the past occupied an intermediate position between the criticism of Dryden and that of Coleridge; was in method, for the most part, objective and analytic, yet was imbued with that sympathy for other ages and for the works of nature and the imagination which is often considered distinctive of a later Romanticism. The early expressions of English Romantic poetry seemed, indeed, as truly the finer development of Classicism as the assertion of an alien and antagonistic spirit; and the criticism that came to its defense was apparently unconscious of any revolutionary purpose, and ignored the idea of any fundamental difference between the old order and the new. The poets and critics who were driven to defend the growing individuality of poetry and its acceptance of a freer and more human ideal, seldom attacked the dominant creed either of verse-form or judgment. They sincerely declared that they had "no peculiar notion to defend, no poetical heterodoxy to support, nor any theory of any kind to vindicate," but they claimed that by faithfully describing the men, manners, and things that they best knew they could not forfeit their title to the name of poets.¹ This appeal to a broader and more vivid experience found abundant justification in the tenets of a Classicism that professed to make nature the standard of all its judgments; the broader sympathy of these critics was the best

¹ Crabbe: Pref. to *Tales of the Hall*; *Works*, VI. 11, and Pref. to *Tales*; *Works*, IV. 141.

rectification of doctrines that had been narrowed by a meagre and superficial interpretation. It is true that many of their opinions would have sounded strange enough to the critics of the Revolution,—the determination of the critical judgment by the age and purpose of the poet, the historical conception of literature, the supremacy of the imagination over the orderly and analytic faculties of mind. But this liberality of interpretation is no more conspicuous in their writings than is the absence of any attempt to formulate different principles of criticism. Their inductions cover a wider ground and their spirit is more sympathetic; but they are almost wholly free from that absorbing subjectivity and search after synthesis that were distinctive of the truly Romantic criticism.

Perhaps the critical writings of Gray best represent the historic and poetic study of literature that held so fair a promise for the future. It is our misfortune that Gray, the poet who "never spoke out,"¹ has left us but little systematic criticism. The outline for the history of English literature, which he had been meditating for years, he sent in 1770 to his friend, Thomas Warton, whose work, like his own, represented the best and most liberal of eighteenth century critical thought. This sketch, and the *Erse Poems* (1761–68), written to illustrate his account of Celtic poetry, are all that remain of any formal attempt at literary history; but his letters and fragmentary papers are rich in suggestion for a liberal and scholarly criticism.

¹ Arnold: *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series, p. 70.

There is little trace of the best fidelity either of the old age or the new in Gray's writing of poems to illustrate history, or in his idea that scarcity of manners and thoughts in early times is compensated by the unbounded liberty given to pure imagination and fiction.¹ But in spite of these signs of a transitional period, his method is, in the main, historic and comparative, while his illustrations are many and suggestive. He constantly quotes our earlier writers; appeals to Wyatt and Surrey and Sidney² as authorities, and finds even such an author as Puttenham not unworthy of frequent reference. Chaucer's metre he explains by the character of Anglo-Saxon.³ Everywhere he recognizes the development and change of the language from the time of its early degeneracy after the Conquest to its loss of music and scope in his own century. But Gray's wide range of interest and knowledge was easily second to his rare critical faculty; his appreciation of the subtle development of character and of the delicate balance of gain and loss involved in all progress is that of a poet possessed of the new historic spirit. His study of history and poetry was, moreover, guided by the highest culture. It is his distinction that he lived with the great poets, above all, with the great poets of Greece; that he "caught their poetic point of view for regarding life, caught their poetic manner."⁴ This poetic point of view for regarding

¹ *Letter to Rev. William Mason*, September 28, 1757.

² *Works*, I. 334-341.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 325, 326.

⁴ Arnold: *Gray; Essays in Criticism*, Second Series, p. 42.

literature was accompanied by an exquisite sensibility to the music of verse; his poet's ear guided him infallibly to the sources of English poetry, and made him quick to perceive their value to the more mechanical language of his day. Of the language of Lydgate, in whom he sees a likeness to Homer, he says: "Ours was indeed barbarous enough at that time, . . . and yet with all its rudeness, our tongue had then acquired an energy and a plenty . . . which at this day our best writers seem to miss and to regret."¹

In his greatness as scholar and poet, Gray stood alone in the critical development of his century; but the more consecutive and formal work of his less gifted contemporaries showed as plainly as his fragmentary papers the trend of criticism toward a liberal interpretation of Classic doctrines. The *History of English Literature* that Gray had long planned, and which was finally written by his friend Thomas Warton (1774-78), became one of the moving forces of the new age. But Warton had already clearly defined his critical method in 1753, when, in his *Observations on the Fairy Queen*, he declared it his chief aim "to give a clear and comprehensive estimate of the characteristic merits and manner, of this admired, but neglected, poet."² The judicial and scientific character of Warton's criticism appears in his reasons for calling attention to the faults of the poem rather than to its beauties; this he had done not

¹ Gray: *Works*, I. 393.

² *Observations on the Fairy Queen*, II. 263.

"from a want of perceiving or acknowledging beauties; but from a persuasion, that nothing is more absurd or useless than the panegyrical comments of those, who criticise from the imagination rather than from the judgment, who exert their admiration instead of their reason, and discover more of enthusiasm than discernment."¹ The whole discussion is carried on in so historic and impartial a spirit that it might rank among the justest criticism of our century. "It is absurd," says Warton, "to think of judging either Ariosto or Spenser by precepts which they did not attend to";² and the critic not only announces as the end of his effort the determination of the standard that Spenser himself accepted, but everywhere endeavors to attain to a clear knowledge of it. The sources of Spenser's poems are considered at length, and Warton excuses himself from possible censure for over-quotation by declaring that the commentator must understand not only the age in which his author lived, but must know the books that he read as well.³ The older poets are no longer put out of the pale of understanding by an inspired but irregular genius; the source and character of their inspiration are sought in the conditions that modified their work. "If Shakespeare is worth reading," says the new critic, "he is worth explaining,"⁴ and with all his delight in "the chymical energy of true genius,"⁵ he does not despair of understanding its most various and subtle transformations.

¹ *Observations on the Fairy Queen*, II. 263.

² *Ib.*, I. 15. ³ *Ib.*, II. 264. ⁴ *Ib.*, p. 265. ⁵ *Ib.*, I. 54.

Among the early works of this conservative, yet radical school of critics, was Joseph Warton's important *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (1756). There were enunciated in this essay no new principles of criticism; but the impartial application of the historic method to the great poet of Classicism was even more indicative of the changed spirit of criticism than was the same treatment of the earlier English poets. In the dedication the author says: "No love of singularity, no affectation of paradoxical opinions, gave rise to the following work. I revere the memory of Pope, I respect and honour his abilities; but I do not think him at the head of his profession. In other words, in that species of poetry wherein Pope excelled, he is superior to all mankind: and I only say that this species of poetry is not the most excellent one of the art."¹ There is in the book, as these few sentences indicate, no trace of a reactionary dislike to the Augustan poet. Warton again and again emphasizes Pope's services to the language, and he praises his *Pastorals* as "giving the first specimen of that harmony in English verse, which is now become indispensably necessary; and which has so forcibly and universally influenced the public ear, as to have rendered every moderate rhymers melodious."² Warton is a true Classicist in his familiarity with the critics and theories of all ages, and in the constant emphasis that he lays on knowledge as an element of criticism. Boileau's *Art of Poetry* he esteemed the

¹ *Essay on Pope*, I. iii., iv.

² *Ib.*, p. 10.

best of its kind ;¹ for Horace, the scholar and man of the world, he had the highest regard ;² Quintilian he admired as one of the most rational and elegant of Roman writers ;³ "to attempt to understand poetry," he says, "without having diligently digested this treatise [Aristotle's *Poetics*], would be as absurd and impossible, as to pretend to a skill in geometry, without having studied Euclid."⁴ But Warton's thoroughly analytic method, his demand for correctness, and his recognition of Pope as "the great Poet of Reason, the *First of Ethical* authors in verse,"⁵ were offset by demands and sympathies that showed the advent of a new era. The greatness of wit and sense is placed infinitely below that of the imagination ; great poet of manners though he was, it is to *Windsor Forest*, *The Rape of the Lock*, and *The Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard*, that Pope will owe his greatness.⁶ The appreciation of a simpler and less sophisticated nature than that to which the earlier Classicists appealed, made him judge *Eloisa* the most interesting of Pope's poems,⁶ or say of Addison's *Cato* that "a stroke of nature" is worth a hundred of its elaborate thoughts,⁷ or declare Thomson's *Seasons* one of the most captivating and amusing poems of the language.⁸ As emphatically as Wordsworth he demands the use of specific rather than general terms in poetry, and remarks the gain in novelty and completeness of imagery

¹ *Essay on Pope*, I. 199.² *Ib.*, pp. 172, 173.³ *Ib.*, p. 177.⁴ *Ib.*, p. 170.⁵ *Ib.*, II. 409.⁶ *Ib.*, I. 347.⁷ *Ib.*, p. 271.⁸ *Ib.*, p. 43.

if poets would but accustom themselves to contemplate fully every object before they attempt to describe it.¹ He complains that no new image marks Pope's *Pastorals*, and that in borrowing from the Bible he loses force through the generalization of specific terms. There is, indeed, in his judgments a sense of the vividness and force of Biblical imagery that had been strange to the generation of Shaftesbury; his appreciation of Dr. Lowth's "prelections on the inimitable poesy of the Hebrews" as "the richest augmentation literature has lately received," marks the turning of literature toward the fervor of the poetry of the East.²

The intellectual apprehension of the moving ideas of Romanticism marked the work of Gray and the Warton brothers; in the writings of Bishop Hurd and Edward Young its emotional and reactionary spirit is clearly expressed. Hurd is indeed historic and scientific in method, and shows the revolt against Classicism chiefly by his preference of Chivalric over Classic types of beauty and culture. But his delight in the singular and fantastic, and his recognition that barbarians have their own philosophy,³ are forecasts of the later Romantic sympathy with the past. He recognizes, indeed, the enduring power of Homer's broad and human type of culture, yet regards the singular and characteristic beauty of chivalry as a higher subject for art, and declares that Homer, citizen of the world as he was, would

¹ *Essay on Pope*, I. p. 48.

² *Ib.*, p. 14.

³ *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*; *Works*, IV. 238.

have painted Gothic more gladly than heroic manners, because of "*the improved gallantry of the Gothic knights,*" and the "*superior solemnity of their superstitions.*"¹ The fitness for art of the sombre mediæval superstitions he infers both from history and the example of the great modern poets. Not only have the superstitions of classic times been intensified by "the gloomy visions of dæmons and spirits, which sprang out of the Alexandrian or Platonic philosophy," and by the "fresh and exhaustless swarm of the direst superstitions" that "took their birth in the frozen regions of the north,"² but Spenser had painted Gothic rather than heroic manners, Milton had long hesitated in his choice between the two, and Shakespeare, whose genius "rambled at hazard into all the regions of human life and manners," was greatest when he used Gothic manners.³ Hurd's perception of the peculiar mediæval beauty intensifies his sense of the prosaic character of his own age. Joseph Warton had already remarked its antagonism to a truly poetic imagination, and had noticed the unfavorable influence on literature of the impulse given to science by the foundation of the Royal Society.⁴ But Hurd went further toward a Romantic conception when he defined the great age of poetry as lying "somewhere between the rude essays of unrestricted fancy on the one hand, and the refinements of reason and science on

¹ *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*; *Works*, IV. 281.

² *Ib.*, p. 284.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 294, 295.

⁴ *Essay on Pope*, I. 161.,

the other," in a time when "the high figurative manner, which fits a language so peculiarly for the uses of a poet, had not yet been controlled by the prosaic genius of philosophy and logic."¹

If Hurd's criticism is stamped by Romantic interest in the Middle Ages, that of Edward Young is thoroughly revolutionary in method and teaching. Unlike his fellow critic, whose work rests on a liberalized interpretation of Classic canons, Young is less significant for the expression of opinions apparently revolutionary than for his assertion of principles subversive of Classicism. Many of his contemporaries would have agreed that Ben Jonson was a mere imitator, who, 'blind to the nature of tragedy, pulled down all antiquity on his head,'² or that Pope's *Iliad*, however great in itself, was still a fall from Homer's numbers "into childish shackles, and tinkling sounds."³ But Young's declaration of such revolutionary opinions rested less on a sympathy wider than that of the stricter Classicists than on a philosophy that they must have repudiated: the right of the individual to be a law unto himself, and the acceptance of originality as the supreme test of genius. Young's critical attitude is determined far more by this demand for individuality and originality than by the finer spiritual understanding that guided the judgment of the Wartons and Gray. Imitation of nature is, in his eyes, the only true

¹ *Dialogues*; *Works*, III. 210.

² *Letters on Original Composition*; *Works*, III. 202.

³ *Ib.*, p. 194.

originality; the books essential to the reading of genius are the books transcribed by Shakespeare and unknown to many of the profoundly read — the book of nature and the book of man.¹ Genius is not only the master workman, learning the instrument; a bold inference is drawn: the greater the genius the less need is there of learning. "Who knows whether Shakespeare might not have thought less if he had read more?"² Admiration is declared the result of ignorance and fear;³ littleness of mind, prostration of spirit, are the evils to be avoided, both in composition and in life; self-reverence is the corner-stone of art; the golden rules of composition, as of ethics, are: Know thyself, Reverence thyself.⁴ The spirit of German Romanticism might have inspired Young's definition of an original, or his declaration of the mysteries of poetry. These mysteries, which "render mere prosemen infidels to their divinity,"⁵ may be admired, but never explained; an original "may be said to be of a vegetable nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it grows, it is not made."⁶

The best promise for the future seemed to lie in the efforts of the early Classicists to establish a philosophy of æsthetics, and in the liberal tradition that had been enriched in its unbroken passage from Dryden to Addison, and from Addison to Gray. But it was Young's emphatic individualism, and Hurd's love of a characteristic and

¹ *Letters on Original Composition; Works*, III. 176, 202.

² *Ib.*, 202. ³ *Ib.*, 193. ⁴ *Ib.*, 19. ⁵ *Ib.*, 183. ⁶ *Ib.*, 177.

chivalric beauty, that best indicated the rising tide of European thought, which was for a time to overwhelm and apparently to destroy the best results of eighteenth century culture. The great men of the Enlightenment had fought a good fight in behalf of humanity and rational freedom. Their gospel was the gospel of sound sense, their weapon the sword of enlightened understanding and keen wit, their burning enthusiasm was a passion for free thought and a hatred of sham and pretense. But these Latinists of culture felt chiefly the scientific, the reasonable, the logical aspects of the Renaissance; they forgot, in the very force of their activity, the reality and power of inner experience. Though always clear and lucid, their exclusive and superficial philosophy dealt with only the half of life. Shaftesbury had early noticed its narrowness in ignoring "*Passion, Humor, Caprice, Zeal, Faction*, and a thousand other Springs which are counter to Self-Interest" in its speculations on character and government. "Modern Projectors," he says, "would new-frame the Human Heart; and have a mighty fancy to reduce all its Motions, Balances, and Weights, to that one Principle and Foundation of a cool and deliberate Selfishness."¹ Thinkers forgot that man was not all mind; they ignored the delicate and fundamental relations that existed outside of an artificial society; after the speculative fashion of the day they had made human nature a thing altogether simple, plain, and easy of comprehension.

¹ *Characteristics*, I. 78, 79.

The rectification of this one-sidedness lay largely in the progress of the Classicists themselves toward a more rounded culture. But the emotional revolt against a narrow system was unfortunately swifter than intellectual advance to a more inclusive philosophy; before the end of the century it had in part transformed, in part destroyed, the work of an earlier school. There are few harder tasks than the definition of this Romantic movement that underlay the great rebellion of its century against accepted standards of thought and life. A renaissance, in essence, of the self-consciousness and delight in individuality that had for generations been absorbed in the wonders of antiquity and science, it was a passion rather than a thought, a pervading inspiration long before it had found a creed, and, in all its infinite combinations with the intellectual and social forces of its day, gave but the most elusive and uncertain accounts of itself. Nor was its transformation of all that it touched — its appropriation of the new history and the new philosophy, of the new democracy and the new sociology — more remarkable than its variety in origin and national manifestation. In England the new spirit won a measure of realism and objectivity by long contact with Classicism, and was throughout far less revolutionary than in France or Germany. In France it first declared itself emphatically in the midst of the Encyclopædists: for Diderot, in so many ways a connecting link between the old order and the new, was an even earlier and more con-

sistent expounder of its doctrines than Rousseau. His emphasis on the part that inspiration bears in genius,¹ his demand that the laws of art be drawn from the common and imperfect works of nature as well as from the excellent and noble,² are as distinctive notes of the new era, as is his divination of the poetry of primitive times and strong passions, or his sense of the poetic value of savage nature, or his readiness to "accept systems that embellish objects,"³ and to break down the boundaries of art for the better expression of morality or pathos. But Diderot's revolutionary criticism was for a time forgotten in the more general attack inspired by Rousseau's fervid social gospel; and the new enthusiasm, meeting the old in a passion for humanity, abandoned thought for action in the days of the Revolution. Nor was this spirit less potent in Germany than in France. In the narrowness of social and political opportunity, the German mind, intensely stimulated by the individualistic enthusiasm of its time, seems to have been thrown back upon itself and to have taken refuge in remorseless egoism or profound reflection; yet alike in the pure humanity of Goethe, and the cynical self-indulgence of the Romanticists, it found its motive in the same ideal, in that intense realization of individual experience which is the key to the most characteristic later culture. Matthew Arnold would lay the meagreness and the deficiencies of Eng-

¹ *De la Poésie Dramatique*; *Œuvres*, IV. 493, 530.

² *Pensées Detachées*; *Œuvres*, X. 169.

³ *Ib.*, p. 188.

land's creative literature in the first quarter of this century to its prematurity, to the fact that it originated in a great wave of emotion rather than a great wave of thought; and finds in the many-sided learning, and the long and widely combined critical effort of Germany, the conditions of Goethe's strength.¹ Perhaps the secret lies rather in the balance and proportion of Germany's intellectual and emotional forces. Its many-sided learning and criticism were thoroughly leavened by the new passion of individualism; England was weak not only in broad and deep culture, but in the vitalizing power of a great emotion.

The change that the Romantic spirit wrought in men's conceptions appears most beautifully in the new dependence and intimacy of their love of nature. The love of nature was, indeed, no more an invention of their school than was the new study of history or antiquity. We think of the sturdy fighters of France and the autocrats of the age of Queen Anne as dwellers in towns, and lovers of the city and its works. Yet they were all susceptible to the cheer and refreshment of country life. "Diderot had a strong spontaneous feeling for nature, as he shows not only . . . in criticism . . . but in his most private correspondence, when he demonstrates in terms too plain, simple, and homely to be suspected of insincerity, the intellectual delight with which the solitary contemplation of fine landscape inspired him. He has no peculiar felicity in describing

¹ *Functions of Criticism; Essays in Criticism*, pp. 6, 7, 8.

natural features in words, or in reproducing the inner harmonies with which the soft lines of distant hills, or the richness of deep embosoming woodlands, or the swift procession of clouds driven by fierce or cheerful winds, compose and strengthen the sympathizing spirit. But he was as susceptible to them as men of more sonorous word. And Voltaire finds the liveliest pleasure in the natural sights and objects around him, though they never quickened in him those brooding moods of egoistic introspection and deep questioning contemplation in which Jean Jacques, Bernardin de St. Pierre, and Sénancour found a sort of refuge from their own desperate impotency of will and of material activity.”¹ The same objective and positive love of nature — a love heightened by knowledge and reflection, and in spirit near akin to philosophy — finds constant expression in the characteristic English writers of the century. Addison’s literary and æsthetic judgments are deeply colored by it.² Atterbury is unceasingly interested in Pope’s garden, and can complain, while writing a letter, that pain and a fine thrush have been severally endeavoring to draw off his attention.³ Pope dwells constantly in his letters on the charms of his garden, and seems not only to have delighted in the glory of his little kingdom,⁴ but, by the naturalness of his taste in an artificial age, to have deeply influenced his contemporaries. Warton ranks him

¹ John Morley: *Voltaire*, p. 206.

² *Ante*, p. 73.

³ *Letter to Pope*, May 25, 1722.

⁴ *Letter to Bishop of Rochester*, March 19, 1721-1722.

with Milton as having founded "this enchanting art of modern gardening," that "*practical* poetry," in which England took precedence of all the Continent; and—that his meaning may be doubly clear—he adds that Thomson, had his style been equal to his conceptions, would also have been "very instrumental in diffusing a general taste for the beauties of *nature* and *landscape*."¹ Pope shows the inevitable rebellion of a hearty and sincere love of nature against the artificial taste of the day. In contrast to the fashion of receding "from nature in the various tonsure of greens into the most irregular and formal shapes," he likes in Homer's garden the trees which were "standards and suffered to grow to their full height."² Appreciation of nature is with him one of the marks of genius. Those most capable of art are always fondest of nature, and first to recognize that all art consists in its imitation and study, while people of common understanding "are principally delighted with the little niceties and fantastical operations of art, and constantly think that finest which is least natural."

The change that came over the love of nature between the first and the second half of the century was a double one; the generic passed over into a specific love, as men came more and more to fix their eye upon the object; and, on the other hand, the object was less regarded in itself, and viewed rather in its relation to man's inner life. The

¹ *Essay on Pope*, II. 180–186.

² *The Guardian*, No. 173.

reconciliation of these apparent contradictions is, perhaps, most perfect in Wordsworth's poetry, where reflection guides feeling, and intensity of inner experience is rectified by exquisite sensitiveness to beauty. But this conscious and reflective love of nature appears hardly less plainly in the delicate and varied appreciation of natural beauty that makes Gray's letters and journals the herald of a purely English Romanticism. Gray's love of nature was deeply modified by his broad and vigorous culture. The companion of the Greeks and the lover of our early literature, he was sensitive to the beauty of nature as to the beauty of art; with the poet's love he combined the knowledge of the scientist and the reflection of the philosopher. The comments that filled his copy of Linnaeus, says Arnold, are those of the intelligent naturalist.¹ The notes that mark the coming summer by the bloom of the trees or the song of the birds show an observation worthy of Jefferies; though Jefferies' passionate intensity be wanting, he is often suggested by the delicacy and accuracy of the descriptions of the earlier poet. Gray notes the changes in the landscape in the different parts of the day; marks the hoar-frost that melts and exhales in a thin bluish smoke; rejoices in the tender emerald green preserved late into the summer by the long rains.² There is a delicate sense of color in his description of Saddleback, "whose furrowed sides were gilt by the noonday sun, while its brow appeared of a sad

¹ *Essays on Criticism*, Second Series, p. 75.

² *Works*, I. 254, 258; III. 242.

purple from the shadow of the clouds, as they sailed slowly by it.”¹ For mountains Gray has, indeed, a special love; and he loves them, besides, with the more conscious, modern need of their outlook and uplift. Much as he delights in a quiet, tranquil country, it is in the bolder scenes that he sees the truly poetical. “You here meet,” he says, in speaking of the road to the *Grande Chartreuse*, “with all the beauties so savage and horrid a place can present you with; Rocks of various and uncouth figures, Cascades pouring down from an immense height out of hanging Groves of Pine-Trees, & the solemn Sound of the Stream, that roars below, all concur to form one of the most poetical scenes imaginable.”² And of the mountains of Scotland he says that they “are ecstatic, and ought to be visited in pilgrimage once a year. None but those monstrous creatures of God know how to join so much beauty with so much horror.”³

The love of nature which made Gray the prophet of Wordsworth appeared in forms as many and various as the poems that it inspired; there was, indeed, no touch of Romantic beauty or Romantic excess that the poetry of the age wholly escaped. It was natural that in England a realistic love of nature and a long habit of observation should most healthily balance the weary weight of subjectivity that fell upon literature and thought after the middle of the last century; and this

¹ *Journal in Lakes*; *Works*, I. 253.

² *Journal in France*; *Works*, I. 244.

³ *Letter to Rev. William Mason*, 1765.

tendency toward objectivity of conception and treatment was infinitely strengthened by the vivid imagery of earlier English poetry and by the simplicity of the English ballads. But the sense of human kinship with the material universe gave a new touch of pathos even to a poet so objective and simple as Burns ; the luxurious despair of the new age colored the gloomy lucubrations of Young, or intensified the force of Byron's descriptions ; its dreamy subjectivity inspired the cloudy pictures of *Ossian* and the exquisite visions of Shelley. This many-sided love of nature acted directly on criticism, as did the study of history and the new interest in humanity, in modifying the single and monotonous standard that had satisfied an earlier generation. But its indirect influence was far deeper ; the widened perception of the beauty of nature and of its healing and gracious influences brought with it a heightened susceptibility to the beauties of art and the finer expressions of the imagination.

More than a hundred years lay between the criticism of Dryden and the generation that was to receive the message of Coleridge. There had been in England no such revolution as in France made the century momentous ; no such stimulus of the intellectual consciousness as in Germany shaped the thought of generations. Whether from national character or the circumstances of its history, England had, since the Revolution, been potent to shape and originate European thought, but had lacked the social and intellectual enthu-

siasm that could concentrate her various activity. Yet, notwithstanding this dispersion of energy, the change that had passed over the face of Europe had deeply affected England; the world with which criticism had now to deal was divided from the world of Dryden by an impassable chasm in interest and sympathy. Even the ruling intellectual conceptions of the two, essentially as they were in fact related, seem at first sight utterly antagonistic. The modern realization of the complexity of life and progress, though hardly less due to Classicism than was the century's encyclopædic increase of knowledge, was working a revolution in men's simpler and more mechanical conceptions of law; the experiential philosophers, by a constant criticism of the sources of knowledge and an extending inclusion of the mental faculties, had indicated their own need of a more thorough psychology, and opened the way to an idealism in whose development they had neither part nor lot. But the change is perhaps most evident in the emotional intensity that succeeded to the earlier reasonableness of judgment. The growing sense of human interdependence, the exacter analysis of philosophy, the splendid developments of science, were all guided by a sensibility that changed the new England and drove it to nature and humanity for relief from its own excess. This universal emotionalism, most typically seen in the Romanticists themselves, appears alike in the best and the worst of the new age; reveals itself now in the finer spirit of the new poetry or the

enthusiasm of a passionate love of humanity, now in the nervelessness and practical inefficiency, or in the recklessness and cynicism, of an egoistic revolt against society.

In this new England the critic had to fulfill many requirements undreamed of by the old philosophy. The widening of the realm of scholarship demanded, even in popular treatment, a method thoroughly scholarly; the advance of philosophy made essential a well-wrought æsthetic theory; the new conception of history asked a correlation of the claims of the past and present; a deeper sense of both humanity and individuality extended the human interest which it at the same time intensified. Criticism had been slow to accommodate itself to the changing environment. Though it had liberalized many of its ideas, and entered many protests against Classic narrowness, it had barely faced the new conditions. The best efforts had been made by men like Gray and Warton, men penetrated by the spirit of the future, but true to the logic and clearness of the old order. Had this advance continued,—had Gray, the critic, but been able to “speak out,” had Wordsworth’s later attempt to justify the principles of his poetry been made philosophic and profound,—the new criticism might have kept the best of its past, and been without those elements of reaction that marked its actual course. But here the narrowness of the Classic school avenged itself; the reactionary got the better of the progressive forces, and there was a complete

break between the new criticism and the great thinkers of the eighteenth century. Nor was there any need to elaborate an opposing system, when in Germany there was already a literature and philosophy and criticism instinct with the new spirit. It was to Germany that the greatest critic of the new age turned, and from Germany that his countrymen received the impulse to a higher and more spiritual culture. For in spite of the realism of Wordsworth and the Platonism of Shelley, it was Coleridge who most deeply influenced the next generation of Englishmen, who widened their experience by contact with the culture of Germany, and revolutionized their critical method by upholding the great truths that the eighteenth century had almost forgotten.

III.

THE GERMAN SOURCES OF COLERIDGE'S CRITICISM.

WHEN, in 1798, Coleridge at last turned toward Germany, the shaping ideas of the next century were already clearly defined. Lessing had been dead seventeen years, Winckelmann almost twice as long, and Schiller and Goethe were then in the fullness of their power. Coleridge's eventful student year was marked by the publication of *Wallensteins Lager* and *Hermann und Dorothea*; it was then seventeen years since *Die Räuber* had strengthened the cause of revolt, and almost a quarter of a century since Europe had listened to the sorrows of *Werther*. The Romanticists, moved in part by the same spirit as the greater poets, were carrying on the tradition of the age of Storm and Stress in a united protest against the separation of life and literature, while Jean Paul was already preaching a more heroic gospel to a younger generation. In the universities the modern order was already established; the disciples of Kant were teaching the Critical Philosophy, and a new science and history were accomplishing the latest revolution in scholarship.

By sensitiveness of temperament and breadth of education, Coleridge was especially fitted to

appreciate the many-sided activity with which he was suddenly brought face to face. Yet his interest in German literature was in fact narrowly limited by that sympathy with Romanticism which for almost half a century had been drawing England toward Germany. Much that was best in German thought he scarcely perceived, much that was to influence our century he misunderstood and misjudged. There is in this new development of English cosmopolitanism a striking analogy with England's earlier intercourse with France. In their reaction against the clearness and definiteness that had attracted them a century before, it was natural that Englishmen should turn to Germany for the example of a more spiritual philosophy and a more comprehensive idea of the past; but the knowledge of Germany that Coleridge brought home to his countrymen, and which was the starting point of the later and more fruitful intercourse, was marked by the same one-sidedness that characterized the earlier acquaintance of England and France. Not only was Coleridge's interest limited to such aspects of thought as centred about Romanticism, but the understanding even of these was limited by the purely English interpretation of principles at once deeper and more varied than those preached by the German Romanticists. Yet, however his teachings individualized a broader Romanticism, it was sympathy with the widest phases of its thought that guided him through the labyrinth of German literature and philosophy,

and gave to all that he appropriated the unity of a common nature and purpose.

In the very limitations of Romantic doctrine and sentiment there lay a real power; shortness and one-sidedness of purpose made them at least more immediately effective. "Almost all rich veins of original and striking speculation," says John Stuart Mill, "have been opened by systematic half-thinkers";¹ and though the Romanticists were for the most part systematic dreamers rather than even half-thinkers, their exclusion of many aspects of life simplified the task of elaborating a critical system that might represent the most potent influences of their age. This work of synthesis was, however, the least of their tasks. Their period of glory may be roughly placed in the ten years between 1795 and 1805, when the French Revolution had stirred men's minds to the depths, and the principles of Kant's philosophy had infinitely stimulated criticism and speculation. In an age when existing standards were attacked on every side, the Romanticists did far more to liberate thought than to establish any theory. What Amiel says of Rousseau was of them emphatically true: imagination was their intellectual axis, passion stirred their imagination and ruled supreme over their reason.² This dissolvent power of passion and imagination they brought to bear on existing conditions; and in this their highest service lies. Europe received but tardily and fragmentarily the

¹ *Dissertations and Discourses*, I. 382.

² *Journal*, August 13, 1865.

full impulse of Germany ; Goethe had little influence till the spirit that he embodied in literature had itself broken down conventional barriers and penetrated men's thought and sentiment. In this work of negation and preparation, the Romantic revolution in critical method was not unlike the revolution wrought by Rousseau in the world of Voltaire. From the time of its origin in the earlier Renaissance, criticism had been almost purely intellectual, — and intellectual hardly less in the logic of its analysis than in its occupation with the reflective faculties and the demonstrable interests of mankind. With the Romanticists not only did the thinker and the citizen yield to the creature of passion and imagination, but the method of criticism was fundamentally changed ; analysis was superseded by an attempt after synthesis, reason gave place to imagination, and perception to sympathy. Fanciful and misty as their systems were when tried by a more objective criticism, they broke down arbitrary boundaries of thought, and, even in their failure, sowed the seeds of a deeper intellectual life.

But the influence on England of any thinker, or school of thinkers, was insignificant beside the entrance of Germany into the intellectual life of Europe. The change in speculation that must inevitably have followed was made revolutionary by the character of German thought, and its relation to the conflicting intellectual forces of the time. For Germany most typically expressed that Teutonic race-consciousness which, ignoring its

own nature in accepting the classic yoke, had from the first underlain the Romantic revolt against a Latinistic culture. Through this earlier and more substantial Romanticism Germany first came into touch with England, and claimed kinship with the great founders of the school in France; and because of their spiritual and intellectual apprehension of Romantic ideas, the Germans forthwith took their place as the leaders of European speculation. The receptive and poetic character of German thought had been quickened into intensity by the circumstances under which it had developed. The lack of national centralization, or of demand for practical energy, had driven the Germans to that "kingdom of the air" for whose rule nature had especially fitted them. Nor was it without significance that they entered the confederation of European thought at the very time when long training was blossoming into cosmopolitan sympathy and curiosity. In the great exchange of ideas between people and people that dates from the closing years of the last century, the Germans quickly found their place in the very centre of Europe's intellectual life.

If national character and social conditions told on the criticism of Germany, it was almost as fundamentally modified by its peculiar and belated development. English and French criticism had been stereotyped at a comparatively early date, and for the last half-century their teachings had been more or less at variance with the progressive and imaginative spirit beginning to pervade litera-

ture. The great French thinkers were for the most part content to accept literary tradition even while they attacked all other authority; the revolt of the English against a system never very firmly established or rigorously applied was partial and timid. Both awaited the stimulus of a criticism that, still in leading-strings in the middle of the century, was at its close reflective with the wisdom of age and experience. Part of its strength lay, no doubt, in the fact that, developing so late, it grew up in an introspective age, when even creative genius dealt consciously and reflectively with the results of a conscious experience. Hardly less of a gain than this critical environment was its reaping of the fruits of European thought. Lessing, inheriting the great example of England and the traditions of France, created a national literature in the very time when all save the most conservative and dogmatic criticism was casting off its formalism. Even before Lessing declared his critical principles, Winckelmann had given a model of historic treatment, and inspired Europe with a passion for beauty and Greek art. Only twenty-six years after the publication of his *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764), the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* (1790) laid a foundation for æsthetics. Under such stimulus the critical activity of Germany knew neither bound nor limit; the literary discussion that centred about Schiller and Goethe, and the theories promulgated by the Romanticists, were but phases of its great critical effort. But only a part of this activity told immediately on

England; only the great earlier critics who shaped the conditions of modern German development, and those among the Romanticists who dealt most profoundly with the problems of literature and æsthetics, directly influenced Coleridge and the criticism of his time.

Lessing occupies a unique position among the great founders of national criticism. Bitterly as he resented the narrowness of a Latin school, the foe of the old dispensation was yet of its own household, the weapon with which he attacked its usurpations was but the spiritual interpretation of its own law. Corneille, whose foundation of a national drama and literature in so many respects reminds us of Lessing's, reconciled liberty and law by the narrowest and most practical interpretation of the ancients. Dryden, supported by a splendid literary tradition, and too good an Englishman to fear compromise, elaborated canons of criticism that were both conservative and scientific. Circumstances gave Lessing a different task. On the one side a French criticism more rigid than that of France ruled the mind of Germany, and condemned its taste and intellect to spend themselves in lifeless imitation; on the other, through a sudden acquaintance with the English stage, which had no fast and evident rules, there was danger that the Germans should despise all rules, lose all the experience of the past, and demand of the poets that each should make art anew for himself.¹ In

¹ *Hamb. Dramat.*, April 19, 1768.

such a strait, not greater liberty but higher law was the pressing need. The creator of modern German literature made a firm stand for authority, but at the same time he revolutionized the ideas of law by a scholarly and liberal interpretation of accepted tenets. The same spirit gives unity to his many efforts in behalf of the enlightenment and culture of his people. While attacking the dogmatism that deadened their religious life, or asserting principles that vivified their theology, he no less strove to break the yoke of the letter than while he was freeing their taste from a humiliating foreign dependence. There was in this purely literary movement a striking analogy with the efforts of Ernesti, Michaelis, and Semler to establish a sound Biblical criticism, an analogy that showed itself perhaps most plainly in the method of interpretation that Lessing advocated. "Aristotle," he said, "must be everywhere explained by himself," and he counseled — to our ears somewhat tritely — the future commentator of the *Poetics* "before all things to read the works of the philosopher from beginning to end."¹ "When in his own reading of so great a man he found apparent contradictions, he distrusted his own understanding rather than his author's, and never ceased to study him till he saw the relation of the perplexity to the whole system."² In this attempt to read the part in the light of the whole, Lessing was one of the first to bring scholarship out of the

¹ *Hamb. Dramat.*, January 19, 1768.

² *Ib.*, September 8, 1767.

schools, and to use it as the weapon of general criticism. This scholarliness of method, moreover, vitalized all his work; made him at once true to the best spirit of antiquity, and enabled him to preserve for the German drama all that is best of modern Classicism.

Something of the cosmopolitanism and many-sidedness of later Germany is seen in the schools of criticism that ruled Germany before Lessing. Gottsched, whose work Lessing was both to fulfill and to destroy, never relaxed in his efforts to force the French interpretations of the ancients on his countrymen, and to establish a reasonable theory of language, criticism, and the drama. The Swiss, who after 1740 succeeded to Gottsched's influence and popularity, were English rather than French in sympathy. Their first important publication, *Die Diskurse der Mahler* (1721-1733) was a weekly journal inspired by a French translation of a copy of the *Spectator* that fell into Bodmer's hands; and judging by the number of translations from English that followed, and the later susceptibility of this school to the *Reliques* and *Ossian*, this apparent chance was the sign of a real affinity. Gottsched shared the interest of the Swiss in England, though his sympathy was more exclusively than theirs given to the workers of the Classic school. There was, indeed, less difference in the aims and interests of the two parties than in their general spirit. Both were occupied with the early history of the German language and literature; Gottsched has the distinction of publishing the first edition

of *Reineke Fuchs* (1752) that had any influence on his countrymen, and of the Swiss Bosanquet says that their sense of unity between ancient and modern life was one of the early signs of a deeper criticism and truer sense of beauty.¹ In their desire to establish canons of criticism the two schools were at one; but the Swiss were more inclined to evolve a theory of criticism, Gottsched and his followers to establish practical conclusions. There is in the Swiss an affinity with the mysterious and wonderful in nature, and a love of the vague and imaginative in poetry, that suggests the later Romanticists, while their opponents laid special emphasis on the virtues of order, simplicity, and lucidity. It was this love of order and simplicity that made Gottsched so strong a power for good in the history of German culture. Thought of those Germans who were ready to imitate everything foreign, who "were far more French than the French themselves,"² tipped Lessing's pen with gall whenever he wrote of the apostle of French classicism. Whether Gottsched's success in driving away the wild seventeenth-century plays and establishing in their stead a French decorum on the stage were loss or gain, may be a question. But in a century when Latin ruled the schools, when French was the language of the court, and when dialects had not yet been moulded into a language, the stern schoolmaster found his place. A faithful disciple of Boileau, Gottsched met the

¹ *History of Æsthetic*, p. 214.

² *Hamb. Dramat.*, November 24, 1767.

want of a common language by accepting the standard of polite society as that of literature, and, from Leipzig as a centre, succeeded in establishing the supremacy of the tongue of Middle Germany. His *Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst*, for which the *Ars Poetica* was translated as an introduction, was published in 1730, and eighteen years later appeared the *Sprachkunst*. Like Boileau in sympathy and method, he aims, like him, after "unadorned clearness, simple naturalness, transparent sentence-structure, strong logical connection."¹ It was through virtues such as these, and efforts such as Gottsched never ceased to make, that Lessing and modern German literature became possible.

With two widely opposed tendencies in habit of thought, with French and English taste striving for mastery, with the broadening of classical knowledge and culture, the time was ripe for the foundation of a German criticism at once national and cosmopolitan. In his taste, as in his work, Lessing shows himself a true son of the Enlightenment. Spinoza, whose spell was to fall over the next generation, counted him, indeed, among his earliest followers, and Diderot, who preceded him in the attack on the French stage, he calls the best of the French critics.² Yet the democracy, passion, and lawlessness that were already signs of the future were utterly repugnant to him. It

¹ Crüger: *Gottsched und die Schweizer; Deutsche Nat. Lit.*, XLII. xxxvii.

² *Hamb. Dramat.*, October 13, 1767.

was no chance that the work of his great contemporary Rousseau repelled him. *La Nouvelle Héloïse* he judges of little value in invention, the situations he finds everyday or unnatural, and the few good ones widely scattered; St. Preux, whose actions belie the reputed wisdom of his works, plays, in his eyes, a tasteless rôle, and the indecorum of Julie's resistance to her father destroys every charm of character.¹ Somewhat the same feeling moved his attack on the race of uncritical critics who herald the new era by crying "Genius, genius! Genius disregards all law; what genius does is law." "They might sooner convince us," he says, "that we no longer find a butterfly bright and beautiful since the wretched microscope has taught us that its colors are only dust."² Unlike these upholders of vagary and caprice, he never swerved from his attempt to raise man as a rational individual to the highest enjoyment of his own powers and the most perfect control over his environment. To this end he laid constant emphasis on liberality and sound reason; enthusiasm, in the sense, at least, in which his contemporaries too often understood the word, had no hold on the thinker who, according to his friend, "even felt solely with his intellect." Like Voltaire — in many respects his prototype — Lessing's best powers seemed to be called out in attacks and defenses; like Voltaire, too, he was master of a polished and worldly style, of keen wit, and of exacting taste in manner and form. His own

¹ *Hamb. Dramat.*, May 26, 1767. ² *Ib.*, April 1, 1768.

mind he aptly analyzed as critical rather than creative: "I do not feel the living springs in me. . . . I should be very poor, cold, and short-sighted, had I not learned modestly to borrow of others' treasures, to warm myself at a stranger's fire, and to strengthen my eyes by the glasses of art."¹ But, however true this self-judgment, Lessing yet clearly recognized that from the exercise of his critical powers he had received something near akin to genius, if not genius itself.

The change in the spirit of criticism, within little more than a century, finds its measure in the contrast between Corneille's and Lessing's execution of a similar task. The very questions that presented themselves for solution had changed their form. The growth of classic scholarship, and the steady development of modern literature, had transformed the rivalry for precedence between Ancients and Moderns into a search for the principles underlying the old and the new literature. Corneille's attempt to make the rules of the Ancients agree with the pleasure arising from modern exceptions,² was supplanted by an effort to find in classic authorities principles that would include both the ancient and the modern types of beauty. It is this liberal purpose which inspired Lessing's attack on the French drama and criticism; and in this spirit he sees alike in Shakespeare and the Greek dramatists the embodiment of the principles enunciated by Aristotle.

¹ *Hamb. Dramat.*, April 19, 1768.

² *Des Trois Unités; Œuvres*, I. 122.

But the spirit of Lessing's criticism is in even stronger contrast to Corneille's than the questions with which he dealt. Not only is Lessing's scholarship to Corneille's "as an Armstrong gun to a bow and arrow,"¹ but the halting and perplexed taste of the one has become the exquisite discrimination of the other, and a single and egoistic purpose has widened into a cultured sensitiveness to all beauty. Lessing's taste, whose delicacy and certainty often reminds us of St. Évremond, makes him, over and above his treatment of theory, one of the great critical interpreters of literature. With utmost liberality he combines utmost fastidiousness of judgment; the delicacy of his sympathy is not less remarkable than its sanity; and with all his love of correctness and decorum he never forgets the humanity that vitalizes social form. The laws of taste have with him already come to be the laws demanded by the nature of the object;² true taste, while universal in its appreciation of every sort of beauty, from each expects only the excellence of its kind; criticism has accepted its task of interpreting, not judging, the works of genius.

The transformation of law from an outer, restraining force to an inner, moulding power, and the conception of an objective beauty as the standard of judgment, at once fulfilled and destroyed traditional criticism. Lessing still relied on authority, still made Aristotle the common

¹ Bosanquet: *History of Æsthetic*, p. 198.

² *Hamb. Dramat.*, July 3, 1767.

judge of Sophocles and Shakespeare. But the letter of the law that he upheld had become nothing, the spirit everything. It was the excessive care for externals that provoked his attack on the French stage; it was by a spiritual unity that he condemned the physical unities of their plays. Character, he said again and again, was the one subject of the drama. Genius may use history and geography as it will, ignore at pleasure the knowledge that it shares with weary plodders; but "the characters must contradict themselves in nothing; they must remain ever consistent, ever like themselves; they may show themselves now weaker, now stronger, as circumstances work upon them; but none of these circumstances must be powerful enough to change them from black to white."¹ Lessing was very far from ignoring sense and reason. He warns actors not to mistake too little understanding for too much fire.² He commended *Agathon* (1766) — that precursor of *Wilhelm Meister* and *Marius the Epicurean* — as "the first and only romance for a thinker of classic taste";³ he argued that "who reasons rightly feels as well, and he who feels must be able to reason."⁴ But all lower powers are contained in genius, which is at once the source and judge of law.⁵ Its one condition is conformity to its own law of beauty and inner unity; subject to this it can create new forms of art at pleasure, can

¹ *Hamb. Dramat.*, August 25, 1767.

² *Ib.*, May 15, 1767.

³ *Ib.*, December 29, 1767.

⁴ *Ib.*, April 1, 1768.

⁵ *Ib.*, May 22, 1767.

do 'with little mechanical rules what it will.'¹ In this unconscious fulfillment of the law of beauty, the relation between art and nature is plain. The character so weak or contradictory as to lack its own fine unity is not a subject for poetic imitation.² Lessing says, indeed, that nothing can be a fault which is an imitation of nature. Yet this statement seems to concern details rather than principles, in the light of his declaration that "the imitation of nature is either no ground of art, or through this imitation art itself ceases to be art, — at least, any higher art than that which would copy in gypsum the veins of marble."³ It is the work of art to penetrate to the soul, and by simplifying the relations and complexities of nature, to make the part stand before us as a perfect whole. This perfect harmony is the highest law of art. The offense against it makes the comitragedy "a Gothic invention," a partial imitation of nature, an imitation of appearances without regard to our sentiments or powers of soul.⁴

Lessing upheld beauty as the law and purpose of art; but he gave only a superficial definition of it, and hardly touched on its deeper relations to life and philosophy. The incompleteness of his analysis was inevitable in an age which was barely thinking of a philosophy of æsthetics; and any seeming antagonism in his teaching between moral and artistic purpose was due far more to this failure than to an over-statement of the fact that

¹ *Hamb. Dramat.*, June 23, 1767. ³ *Ib.*, January 1, 1768.

² *Ib.*, August 25, 1767.

art as art deals with beauty, and not with conduct. The emphasis which he laid on objective beauty as the end of art was often sharpened into an antithesis by the too narrow insistence of his age on its moral utility. The discussion of the Laokoon rests on a disinterested theory of art, and Lessing repeatedly asserts the moral freedom of æsthetic purpose. Yet if he contradicts the assertions of a superficial ethical system, he builds on a deeper foundation than that which he has destroyed. The moral law is with him the abiding power which finds expression in all art, but perhaps especially in the drama. Miracles on the stage, he says, may be suffered in the physical world, but in the moral all must follow its regular course; "for the theatre must be the school of the moral world."¹ This sense of the essential morality of art is, moreover, vivified by an enthusiasm for it that absorbs all petty and personal aims. In the integrity of purpose that marks genius, there is a high morality, though a morality, it may be, more akin to the Greek than to the modern spirit, and inspired rather by the rationalism of the Deist than the mysticism of the Christian. But the poet who has "learned to know mankind and himself, to be watchful of his feelings, in everything to seek and love the straightest and shortest ways of nature, and to judge everything according to its purpose,"² has laid the foundation of a sound morality, as well as of a noble art.

¹ *Hamb. Dramat.*, May 5, 1767.

² *Ib.*, October 16, 1767.

It is prophetic of the swift development of German thought that, even while Lessing was creating German literature and perfecting the Classic criticism of Europe, Winckelmann was giving a model and an inspiration to the future. There could hardly be a greater contrast than between the lives and works of these two men. Lessing, possessed by the great social idea of his century, neither sought nor refused opportunity; his motives were as practical as his work was enduring. Winckelmann, living in the same stirring period, could withdraw from a life of outer activity and devote himself to the disinterested study of Greek art. Nor were his conclusions seemingly perplexed by the rival claims of the moderns. He never went beyond antiquity to trace a history of beauty that might be for the race what their ideal was to the Greeks; the past was, with him, completely severed from the present. Yet it was, perhaps, because of this very severance, that he alone of his generation "succeeded in furnishing the mind with a new organ and new methods of study in the field of art."¹ If Lessing prepared the way for Goethe, Winckelmann fashioned that knowledge of antiquity, and created that modern sense of its beauty, from which his culture drew half its nourishment. This purely intellectual influence was singularly increased by the charm of his personality; the unity and concentration of his long intellectual effort found its stimulating counterpart in his history and character. A youth

¹ Hegel: *Introd. to Philosophy of Fine Arts*, p. 120.

of hardship, disappointment at the universities, five years of painful drudgery as a teacher, the humiliation of professing a religion at least indifferent to him, that he might devote himself to the study of antiquity in Rome, — none of these robbed him of the poise and integrity that made him master of his late opportunity.

Winckelmann's first important work, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechen* (1755), though epoch-making in its treatment of art, was limited by a purely German experience. But his greatest book, *Die Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764), published nine years later, marks the union of modern scientific method and humanistic tradition and enthusiasm. Winckelmann, the student of Montesquieu, had almost become a writer of history; and, in his treatment of ancient art, we see everywhere the spirit and method of the great critical thinkers of his century. Climate and race are, in accordance with their teaching, accepted as moulding forces in art, which yet depends even more intimately on social conditions, and on the ideas that inspire and underlie them. The whole English development is altered by the fact that in England reason rules imagination; the history of Egyptian art is like their land itself, a great desert plain that one can overlook from a few high towers; with all its advantages of race and condition, Greek art was chiefly great because of the Greek freedom of mind; it was freedom that inspired the great art of Athens, and because of their slavery the colonies of Asia

Minor, in spite of every physical advantage, failed to produce any great work. This repeated statement of the dependence of art on character and social condition is completed by Winckelmann's historic treatment of it; in his limited field he traces its process of development, and analyzes its periods of growth and excellence and decadence. The love of generalization which he shared with his contemporaries was offset in all his work by the most painstaking deference to facts, and by a critical acumen worthy of the disciple of Bayle. In his study at Rome there appeared a patience and independence that would do honor to a modern laboratory. A year of waiting for the clue that should guide him through the labyrinth of its art seemed as nothing to one who rested in the knowledge that "the good and the beautiful are but one, and that only a single way leads to them, while to the bad and evil there lead many ways."¹ His faith in the end inspired constant and various efforts to reach it. He never failed to try observations by systematic knowledge; yet he could use a half-proved truth to guide him through uncertainty and ignorance, and, even in the prejudice in favor of antiquity, found stimulus to the patience necessary to divine its spirit.²

To such a temper there could be nothing small in art. The folds of a garment and the motion of a horse are worthy the attention of a philosopher; the value of the study of coins is that it gives the

¹ Vor. *Anmerk. Geschichte der Kunst; Werke*, III. 35.

² *Ib.*, pp. 30, 36.

many a chance for the direct and experimental knowledge that Winckelmann prizes as highly as Bacon. But this truth of observation is ennobled by the spirit that sees in all detail the expression of a deeper humanity. With this sense of the vital relation of art to character, the smallest token, the humblest study, becomes significant. There is no more beautiful passage in Winckelmann than that in which, speaking of the study of coins, he says: "In studying them one will not lose himself in trifles if antiquities be regarded as works made by men whose thoughts were higher and more manly than ours; and this consideration can raise us in the examination of these works over ourselves and over our time. A thinking soul cannot occupy itself with trivial ideas on the border of the wide sea; the boundless prospect widens the limits of the soul, which seems to lose itself, but comes back to us all the greater."¹

In method Winckelmann was a modern of the moderns, but in sympathy and spirit he was a Greek of the Greeks. It was, indeed, through the interpretation of the ancients that he won his place in modern thought; his method was little more than the means through which the spirit of antiquity came home to European culture. From his earliest student days Winckelmann, notwithstanding his love of Pope and Voltaire and the English Deists, had been irresistibly attracted toward Greek, — a study still neglected in the universities, but already beginning to feel the

¹ Vor. *Anmerk. Geschichte der Kunst; Werke*, III. 37.

strong impulse of more faithful classical scholarship and the increasing knowledge of ancient art. He had first, according to Goethe, been attracted to the poets of antiquity as the monuments of ancient languages and literature, rather than by appreciation of their poetry or care for the orthodox classical scholarship.¹ Yet his early and long study of Greek literature not only aided him vitally in understanding Greek art, but enabled him to say that it was his greatest satisfaction by its means to explain or restore the passages of old writers.² The interests of technical scholarship were, however, lost in his enthusiasm for Greek beauty. As he turns from the art of earlier races to that of Greece, there comes a new power and color into his words ; this earlier study may widen our conceptions, he says, and lead to justness of judgment ; but it is in the art of the Greeks that we find expressed the everlasting truth, the rules for all right judgment and work.³ This acceptance of a predominant standard, and his failure to consider the difference between ancient and modern types of beauty, perhaps caused his perplexity when confronted with such a subject as allegory, and led him now and then into ambiguities that might justify the worst vagaries of the Romanticists. An even more important limitation of Winckelmann's thought came from his almost exclusive acquaintance with the late works of Greek art

¹ *Winckelmann: Werke*, XXX. 38.

² *Vor. Anmerk. Geschichte der Kunst; Werke*, III. 47.

³ *Geschichte der Kunst; Werke*, IV. 62.

then found in Rome, or revealed by the excavations of Herculaneum and Pompeii.¹ But if these discoveries did little to increase the knowledge of antiquity, they at least quickened a universal sense of nearness to its life. It was through this sense of nearness that the great critic, in spite of the meagreness of his resources and the incorrectness of many of his conclusions, came unerringly to a comprehension of the antique world, — divined, as it were, its very temperament and inmost thought.

True-born Greek that he was, Winckelmann could understand and interpret an ideal untouched by the modern divisions and dissipations of energy. In his own singleness of mind and character he stood in strong contrast with the modern tendency to waste and dispersion of energy. Goethe already remarked the singularly classic qualities of a mind that not only found a centre in Greek art, but could concentrate all its powers on the perfecting of this single object of study.² There is something of the same spirit in his single-hearted and steadfast devotion to his friends, and in his ideal of friendship — not that of Christians, but the friendship shown in some illustrious examples of antiquity — as the greatest of human blessings or virtues.³ A character so vital and complete was equally repelled by superficial analysis and yearning symbolism; the artists of his day who "long

¹ Bosanquet: *History of Æsthetic*, p. 193.

² Winckelmann: *Werke*, XXX. 12.

³ *Brief an den Grafen von Büchau*, September 17, 1754.

in their figures for a soul that leaves its course like a comet”¹ were no less false to art than the superficial thinkers who forgot its living sources in care for mere form. In the ideal in which Winckelmann lived there could be no sacrifice of any part, no consciousness of conflict between moral and æsthetic purpose. For him beauty is harmony, — a harmony in which sensuous beauty is perfect, but perfect because subordinate to the higher spiritual beauty. There may be vagueness in the idea that the highest beauty is God, and that the conception of human beauty is perfect in proportion as it can be thought in conformity to and in accordance with the highest beauty.² But the spirituality of art appears even in its origin; through the religious as well as the creative instinct it rose from its first crude attempts to copy nature³ into a vital, perfect, and harmonious whole. It is in the completion and perfection of ideal beauty — the product of the united effort of nature and spirit and art — that the meaning of a divided and imperfect nature is made manifest; and it is in its expression of this wholeness and simplicity that the art of antiquity has its chief value for the culture of taste. But its charm and greatness lie hardly less in its quietness and repose. There is always in Winckelmann’s conception of beauty, as in the sea that never ceases to fascinate him, a depth unstirred by the storms above. His

¹ *Nach. der Griechen; Werke*, I. 33.

² *Geschichte der Kunst; Werke*, IV. 60.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 62, 85.

idea of Laokoon as stoical in his suffering is the familiar illustration of his conception of the Greek ideal; but his habitual illustrations—the power to say much in little, the quietness of beautiful people, the water that is tasteless in proportion as it is pure¹—all emphasize the balance and reserve of forces that from the time of Winckelmann became one of the moving ideals of Europe.

The influence of Winckelmann was quick to tell on the younger poets and writers of Germany, who could not but respond to a work so intense and vital, and to an example of such disinterested fidelity. But though Winckelmann did even more than Lessing to open the broad "thoroughfare of human life, which binds the ages together,"² his work showed the same want of a philosophic basis. He was naturally less interested than Lessing in the utilitarian thinking of his day, and the whole purpose of his work led him further from anything like systematic æsthetic discussion. But there are in his writings many signs of the lack of a defined theory of beauty. Even his reflections on antiquity are marked by a certain negativeness of treatment, and when he deals with modern art he falls into endless perplexity from his failure to understand its profound difference from that of Greece. He himself seems to have dimly perceived the weakness of his position. More than once he dwells on the difficulty of a positive conception of beauty. He cannot accept the judgment

¹ *Geschichte der Kunst*; *Werke*, IV. 61, 192.

² Bosanquet: *History of Æsthetic*, p. 252.

of those sages who see in it adaptation of means to ends, the harmony of the creature with its purpose;¹ the impossibility of demonstrating the nature of beauty after the manner of geometry leaves one to the guesses and glimpses of partial and probable inference, and accounts for the variety of tastes and the impossibility of establishing canons by which the beautiful may be distinguished from the ugly. It is easier, he says, comparing the subject to Cotta's discussion of God in Cicero, "to say what beauty is not, than what it is; . . . for beauty is one of those quiet secrets of nature whose workings we all see and feel; but a universal and clear idea of its character lies among the undiscovered truths."²

Philosophy on its side had been attempting to supply the need dimly perceived by criticism. The successors of Bacon and Hobbes had been constant in æsthetic and ethical speculations. From Germany and the development of the Wolffian philosophy had come in 1750 the first book that bore the name of æsthetics. But it was in the attempted synthesis of Kant that the æsthetic activity of the century — whether that of the practical moralists, of the experiential metaphysicians, or of the German idealists — first became of real importance to philosophy. This arose in part from Kant's correlation of the laws governing the intellectual, moral, and æsthetic faculties;

¹ *Geschichte der Kunst; Werke*, IV. 59.

² *Ib.*, pp. 45, 46.

in part from his establishment of a reasonable æsthetics, which served as a point of departure for discussion and further development; in part too — and that perhaps chiefly — from the stimulus given to critical thought by his great revolution in philosophy. Almost a century and a half after the death of Descartes, philosophy shifted its position from scrutiny of knowledge to scrutiny of the grounds on which knowledge rests, and, thus, fully accepting doubt as its principle of inquiry, became truly critical. This change in the attitude of philosophy brought all the questions that concerned it to a new statement, and formed a great turning point in thought. Like its analogue, the French Revolution, the critical philosophy defined the conditions in which its successors had to work; like that, its ultimate truth was less immediately momentous than the power that it expressed and evoked.

Kant did more to state than to solve the æsthetical problem. In a philosophy where the understanding deals with concepts and phenomena, where reason deals with moral law and reality, the judgment forms a middle term by which the mind may pass from one of these to the other. Æsthetics, one of the two subjects with which judgment has to concern itself, thus forms a link between the purely intellectual and the purely moral natures; it is here that the conceptions of reason can embody themselves, and it is through "a ground of supersensible unity" that lies at the base of all consciousness, that the transition from

one realm to the other becomes possible.¹ Yet this judgment, though universal, is purely subjective ; from its very nature it has no knowledge of the thing in itself, but only in so far as the object calls forth a harmonious and pleasurable interaction between the powers of the understanding and of the imagination. The beauty perceived in the recognition of this harmonious interaction is distinguished from the merely pleasant, the object of animal gratification, and from the good, the object of rational desire, by its disinterestedness, by the pure pleasure it gives a being at once animal and rational. But the satisfaction given by a beautiful object, though universal and necessary, can be reduced to no formula of the understanding, and hence must always remain purely subjective. Its utter subjectivity appears perhaps most plainly in Kant's failure to reconcile our perceptions of purpose and of beauty ; though a beautiful object must have a purposive form and be fitted to the fulfillment of its functions, it is yet beautiful only in so far as we are unconscious of this purpose. Kant's followers were not slow to criticise his æsthetic system. A beauty that, in spite of universal perception, remained wholly subjective, evaded rather than solved the real difficulty ; a beauty that existed only by ignoring vital relations involved hopeless contradictions when, in its higher manifestations, it partook of a moral as well as a purely natural character. Yet Kant, by making æsthetics an essential part of phi-

¹ *Kritik of Judgment*, pp. 12, 13.

losophy, made philosophy henceforth the foundation of the higher criticism. However his system was afterwards modified or enriched, he clearly stated the interest of the beautiful "to metaphysics as the tangible meeting-point of reason and feeling, and to criticism as the expression of human life in its changing phases and conditions."¹ The power of this idea is perhaps best seen in the pre-vaillingly philosophical character of the criticism of the next period. Goethe insisted, indeed, on the need of a criticism more human and concrete than one that could be reduced to any system; but Schiller was inspired to the reconciliation of art and philosophy; and the poets and critics of the Romantic school, carried headlong into an impetuous activity, persistently applied their new principles, though narrowing them by an emotional and mystical interpretation. Henceforth the practical and historic study of literature was supplemented by a scientific search after metaphysical and æsthetic principles, which could rest in no "mere criticism of works of art or suggestions for their production, . . . which had no other aim than to pursue the fundamental idea of the beautiful and of art through all the stages which it traverses in its realization, and by means of thought to make them certain and intelligible."²

In 1764 *Die Geschichte der Kunst* interpreted Greece to modern Europe, and gave its masterly

¹ Bosanquet: *History of Æsthetic*, p. 166.

² Hegel: *Vorlesungen über die Æsthetic*; *Werke*, X. 3, 581.

example of method. Two years later the *Laokoon* defined the provinces of the several arts, and between 1767 and 1769 the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* perfected Classic criticism by penetrating to the spirit of the writings that it had interpreted. In 1781 the *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft* worked its great revolution in philosophy, and in 1790 the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* marked as important an epoch in the history of æsthetics. But within the twenty-six years when German criticism was receiving this threefold impulse, national thought had been stimulated on every side. At the beginning of the century Germany had been isolated from almost all foreign influences save those of Rome and France; at its close it was the centre of the intellectual interest of Europe. The knowledge of a single school of English writers had, even in the time of Lessing, widened into an enthusiasm for Shakespeare and an interest in the earlier English literature. The Seven Years' War had brought in its wake a new knowledge of Asia, and the studies of Sir William Jones in Sanskrit were laying the foundations of a philology based not alone on Greek and Latin, but on Indo-European scholarship. Interest in the Middle Ages was stimulated by both the political and the literary need of a national tradition; Lessing's resistance to France rested on the demand for a literature thoroughly German in character and purpose as well as on the tenets of a liberal criticism, found support in *Minna von Barnhelm* no less than in the doctrines of the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*.

The enthusiastic welcome and the immediate influence of the Percy ballads are a well-worn illustration of Germany's sensitiveness to the charms of mediæval tradition. But even more significant of the drift of the age was Goethe's short essay, *Deutsche Baukunst* (1773), which not only gave an early impulse to the study of Gothic architecture, but showed a clear perception of the spirit and beauty of the Middle Ages.

The study of the Middle Ages which Goethe, for the most part, left to others, was transformed by the interpretation of his older contemporary, Herder. Herder holds a unique position in an age whose turbulent activity he did much to direct. Unlike Lessing and Winckelmann and Kant, he contributed no new thoughts to the onward movement of German criticism. The idea of the development of mankind had already been as logically considered by Lessing and Kant; the historic study of literature was, in a sense, the corollary of Winckelmann's historic study of art. But to the purely intellectual conception of literature as related to social and physical conditions, Herder brought a Romantic sympathy for Teutonic traditions, and that enthusiasm for primary and original types of art that had begun to supplant the earlier search after perfection. The change in the point of view is clearly seen in Herder's literary taste, which, much as he loved the Greeks, was as distinctly Romantic as that of Lessing and Winckelmann had been classic. He owned to a greater nearness to Shakespeare than to the

Greeks.¹ In *Ossian*, and the old poems of northern Europe, he felt the common race-interest that appealed throughout to the Romantic spirit. As characteristically Romantic was his perception of a kind of greatness that escapes the rules of antiquity. When Lessing had tried to find in the dramas of Sophocles and Shakespeare the varying expression of a common law, Herder boldly declared them two things, and pointed to the danger of confusing opposites that chanced to be called by the same name.² The spirit of the new age spoke, too, in his love of music. Lessing's treatment of art he would have completed by the analysis of a musician.³ The pictures of Homer he calls musical paintings, each tone as it passes being reinforced by another in the same key; through music he thought that the energy of Homer's manner could best be made clear.⁴ To the new historian Lessing had already become the mere judge of poetic taste, Winckelmann the teacher of Greek art.⁵ If the critic would understand the various forms of an universal and harmonious development, or free himself from the tyranny of a narrow taste, the knowledge of European literature must be supplemented by the broadest study not only of mankind, but of the physical universe. This appreciation of the great scientific and literary movements that were revolutionizing the thought of his century, gave

¹ *Shakespeare*; *Werke*, III. 2, 239.

² *Ib.*, p. 230.

³ *Kritische Wälder*; *Werke*, III. 2, 121.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 120.

⁵ *Ib.*, pp. 7, 8.

Herder's criticism its immediate and vitalizing power, and enabled it, in spite of its incompleteness and contradictions, to bring the half-formulated motives of the age vividly home to the consciousness of the younger poets.

There was already apparent in Herder a trace of the emotionalism that accompanied the intellectual Romanticism of the century and, at least for a time, blurred the clearness of even the greatest minds. For, powerfully as the reflective and analytic faculties were affected by the new conception of human dignity, of the province of philosophy, of progress and evolution in human affairs, the emotions and the imagination were more immediately and directly called into play. The intellectual sins of the age—brooding egoism, perpetual self-projection, a craving for imaginative excitement—looked at first very like the broader sympathy demanded by new conditions. But the egoism of this sympathy appeared in its tendency to a speedy loss of taste and knowledge. In their reaction against a dull uniformity and the perpetual application of mechanical rules, the Romanticists made sympathy a chief requisite of criticism; their test of understanding an author was power to live in his spirit, and they called the best translations the mystical representations of an ideal work of art. The positiveness of excellence that was ignored in such judgments was soon despised; Shakespeare and Calderon were, in the end, strangely alike to Romantic enthusiasm; the attempt to escape from conventionality led to

the lifeless imitation of the Pre-Raphaelites. The Romanticists represented, it is true, the excess of this spirit, an excess with which it is far from just to charge their contemporaries. It is true, too, that however lost in emotion men seemed, their minds were in essence critical and analytic, and the habit of analysis that pervaded and controlled even creative literature was warrant for the universal discussion of critical principles, and for the fresh reshaping and synthesis that would bring them into harmony with the general thought of the age.

The critical activity of the time finds a curious commentary in the attitude — now friendly, now antagonistic — of its greatest thinker. Alien as much of its speculation was to so concrete a mind as Goethe's, the circle that gathered round him at Weimar took constant part in the discussion of the new critical theories. Goethe himself never accepted or promulgated any formal critical philosophy. Ever attracted by the earliest men and schools, in which poetry and religion are blended, and believing that there is little need of a general philosophy when one is implicit in religion and the arts,¹ he was naturally averse to anything like the elaboration of a system. But in the constant discussions between him and his friends the new phases of criticism were not less vitally treated because informally considered. The prevailing taste of the little company was moulded by the enthusiasm for Greek art that was its direct inheritance from Winckelmann; but, real as was the

¹ *Wahrh. und Dicht.*, XXI. 5, 6.

classic sympathy of these poets and thinkers, they were profoundly interested in the significant and the characteristic, in natural as opposed to conventional symbolism, — the subjects whose discussion had, since Kant, supplanted the earlier watchwords of taste and beauty.¹ In the light of a new period, Hirt, following Winckelmann's method, reached the conclusion against Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, and Goethe, that not objective beauty and softening of expression, but only individual, real significance, or the characteristic, was the object of the ancients.² Goethe's orientalism, perhaps ruled by a classic sympathy for clearness and beauty of form, led him to Arabia rather than to India; much as he appreciated the natural circumstances of the Sanskrit poetry, he was repelled by its land of wonder that lies between heaven and earth, poetically heightened and under the special care of the gods.³ In like manner, his care for the Middle Ages was modified by a far deeper sympathy with the spirit of antiquity. His early study of Gothic architecture was the prophecy of an interest in which he had little later share. Yet, aloof from the movement as he seemed to stand, the reconciliation of the clashing ideas of classic and mediæval tradition is essential to the culture of Faust, in whom Goethe embodies the spiritual history of his age, as in Werther he had expressed a mood and experience of his youth.⁴

¹ Bosanquet: *History of Æsthetic*, p. 274.

² *Geschichte der Bild. Künste*, p. viii.

³ *Ind. Dicht.*; *Werke*, XXXIII. 280.

⁴ *Wahrh. und Dicht.*, XX. 113.

Goethe, who never ceased to speak in parable and to seek for every experience its artistic expression, was exceeded in immediate critical influence by Schiller, who was enough of a metaphysician to be irresistibly attracted by the new theories. Interested in the study of mind as Goethe was interested in the study of nature, and seeking a rational foundation for his thought as inevitably as Goethe shaped his into artistic life, Schiller began the reconciliation of the philosophic and the historic principles of criticism. In the eye of the artist, Kant's definition of a purely subjective beauty, whatever its metaphysical value, was belied by the actual existence of the world of art. By means of the objective reality of this world, where the unity demanded by the understanding was alone compatible with the variety demanded by nature,¹ Schiller "broke through the Kantian subjectivity and abstractedness of thought,"² and vindicated at once the reality of art and criticism. But not content to assert the objectivity and reality of art, he also treated it in relation to the development of mankind, and traced its course as, through the ever-refining play-instinct of the race, it grew from a crude love of ornament and a gross delight in sport to the beauty and perfection of its varying forms. The dignity of art was saved by its relation to perfect human development. The æsthetic faculties were no longer, as with Kant, a stepping-stone between the lower and the higher

¹ *Æsth. Erziehung des Menschen*; *Werke*, X. 159.

² Hegel: *Intro. to Fine Art*, p. 116.

powers; but an active and sensitive imagination was as truly a part of the perfect man as a profound and enlightened understanding. In the culture of the understanding at the expense of the imagination, Schiller saw the weakness of his age. He declared that if the culture of parts involves sacrifice of symmetry, or if the law of reason struggles inevitably against nature, there must be a higher art which will restore the loss that art and culture have caused;¹ that the sacrifice of the individual involved in the social antagonism of forces can be made good only through the beauty that leads him into the world of ideas without taking him from the world of sense.² To this view of the psychological and historical relations of art, Schiller added an analysis of its nature then new in æsthetics, and possible only through knowledge of its development in modern as well as ancient times. The distinction between the conscious and the unconscious, the direct and the indirect method of expression, first clearly drawn by Schiller and since accepted as characterizing Romantic and Classic art, was the direct result of the broader and more sympathetic study of history. But in spite of a universal interest in the past, and of his endeavor to consider it after the manner of the new criticism, Schiller's personal taste inclined him to the culture of the Greeks as absolutely as did that of Winckelmann or Goethe. In them alone did he find blended the tenderness and the

¹ *Æsth. Erziehung des Menschen; Werke*, X. 170.

² *Ib.*, p. 237.

energy, the sense of form and the love of variety, the philosophic reflection and the creative power that are the birthright of an ideal humanity.¹

Schiller's critical speculations, lying in the debatable land between philosophy and literature, were rich in suggestion to the Romantic writers, who were all too ready to elaborate systems and philosophies. But in spite of their longing after theory, their activity, for the most part, lacked definiteness and purpose, and their chivalrous waste of energy was avenged by practical impotency in the establishment of principles. Wide as was the immediate influence of a school so spendthrift of its strength, it was yet only through Schelling, its single great original thinker, that it became a lasting power in thought. The Schlegels held a place in the common movement by popularizing philosophical ideas and by indefatigable energy in translating. It was they, says Hegel, "who, armed with their critical understanding, set themselves somewhere near the standpoint of the Idea, and with great plainness of speech and audacity of innovation, though with but a poor admixture of philosophy, delivered a clever polemic against traditional views."² There can be no doubt that they prepared a way for better things, both by attacking the idols of their day and by disseminating sound principles of criticism. But their standard of judgment was marked throughout by an indefiniteness and vacillation that

¹ *Æsth. Erziehung des Menschen*; *Werke*, X. 164.

² *Intro. to Fine Art*, p. 121.

utterly destroyed its value; the uncertainty of their taste was supported by a shallow philosophy, most significant for its degradation of Fichte's moral and energetic egoism into the doctrine of Romantic Irony. Few writers of the school, however, contributed so much as the Schlegels toward the establishment of a philosophic criticism. Tieck did yeoman service as a translator, and perhaps most perfectly embodied the Romantic spirit of revolt against society. The suggestions of Novalis — though the very essence of Romanticism is in their dreamy philosophy and mystical criticism — are but fragments, and with all their charm do little to widen philosophical and critical conceptions. But Schelling, developing the principles of Kant's philosophy and completing the synthesis begun by Schiller, not only carried on the work of the past, but touched it with the charm of an original and vital personality.

But the influence of the Romanticists lay rather in stimulating the sensibility of their age than in any direct contribution to its thought. The introspective love of nature, and the rebellion of the individual against society, had already been the theme of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers*. But the "religion of the heart," which had inspired Rousseau's social enthusiasm and Goethe's artistic embodiment of the egoism of his youth, called the Romanticists from a world of material and intellectual activity to a luxurious indulgence in emotion, from the world of artistic creation to the search for an omnipresent sym-

bolism. Their artistic attempt to "let the idea be divined by way of parable"¹ was, furthermore, offset by that search after the spirit which modified their science and philosophy. In an age when even a thinker like Goethe was interested in astrology, and when Madame de Staël owned the attraction of "the nocturnal side of nature," the study of the Romanticists was guided throughout by the analogy that they perceived between the "parts of nature and the human soul."² Science thus became the interpreter of mind, and finally even of mood; that love of nature "in which the naturalist was not without his part"³ vanished before a sense of its mystery and an attempt to realize through the imagination the abysmal sources of being. Knowledge had indeed been from the first of little value in the eyes of the new enthusiasts. In *La Nouvelle Héloïse* we are warned not to neglect the relations of the outer world, in order that we may better understand their connection with ourselves; but we are already told that a true heart is the first organ of truth.⁴ It was but a step from this negative attitude toward knowledge to fanaticism for the rights of fancy; and the crusaders of the imagination were not slow to revenge the long encroachment of the understanding on their territory. The reality of the soul-life was now made to imply the nothingness of nature; the outer, which had so

¹ Heine: *Die Rom. Schule; Werke*, VIII. 38.

² Madame de Staël: *De l'Allemagne*, p. 455.

³ Johnson: *Lives*, III. 235. ⁴ *Œuvres*, X. 4.

long absorbed the inner, became only its shadow. Novalis, the most charming and spiritual of the Romanticists, repeats this thought again and again in the few writings that he has left us. Nature is with him "an encyclopædic, systematic index or plan of our spirit."¹ The value of the outer world is but to lead to a continuous self-revelation; everything we see or hear serves, as it were, to draw away a bolt and open new windows into the soul.²

The emphasis on feeling and imagination that made the Romanticists refuse to look at nature as a thing existing in and for itself, modified their thought on every subject. The unity in nature for which they longed was a unity where all was still "without form and void"; in the ideal life activity and individuality were lost in contemplation. Their pantheism was thus rather the world-weary and contemplative pantheism of India, than the active, enjoying pantheism of Greece. In this turning from the fixed forms of nature to its mysterious beginnings, and from an active life to one purely subjective and egoistic, the meaning of both life and nature is hopelessly narrowed. St. Preux passively allows his years to be consumed in his one passion. Werther's active powers are benumbed into an unquiet idleness; he cannot rest, and yet he cannot act. But St. Preux finds occupation at last in the training of Julie's children; and Werther, still realizing the value of activity, envies Albert even while

¹ *Schriften*, II. 105.

² *Ib.*, I. 90.

luxuriating in emotion. William Lovell, that typical egoist of his school, when he reflects on the enlightenment of his age, can only say, "But the romantic night and morning-glow were more beautiful than the gray light of a cloudy sky."¹ Novalis goes still farther; the poet's "tender sympathy for the mysterious spirit of life"² has only taught him that life, love, and individuality are diseases of the spirit.³ Like Shelley as he is in delicacy of imagination and charm of spirit, the truth and freedom that inspired the English poet were for him no more than a dream.

This inwardness of the life of the imagination absorbed the worlds of art and duty, as well as the world of nature and the desire for practical activity. In its intensity the forms of art vanish before the outer mystery that appeals to the mystery in us. Poetry no more works with tool or hand; eye and ear know nothing of her task — "es ist alles innerlich."⁴ Duty, like art, vanishes with outer reality; will becomes arbitrariness, choice becomes caprice. Sensibility and sensuality walk together; ambition is the sign and seal of genius, and the longing for sympathy covers a multitude of sins. Lovell, the true hero of his school, exclaims at thought of the unreality of the French stage, "Sophokles! und göttlicher Shakspeare!"⁵ Yet Lovell himself never ceases

¹ Tieck: *William Lovell; Werke*, VI. 51.

² Novalis: *Schriften*, I. 80.

³ *Ib.*, II. 116, 123, 124.

⁴ *Ib.*, I. 23.

⁵ *William Lovell; Werke*, VI. 52.

to play a part, longs to make a tragedy over himself, and thinks it most wonderful that there are men in the world who can still carry on what they call business.¹ The very attacks of the Romantists upon the social narrowness of their day were vitiated by personality and egoism. Madame de Staël, protesting against the intellectual provincialism of the nations of Europe, was inspired by a desire for social as well as for individual liberty; Goethe's work found its centre, as truly as did that of the Romantists, in the consideration of the inner life. But Goethe began where they ended; mystery was with him an incentive to search for light; passion and emotion were means, not ends, of culture.

There is in Schelling's criticism little trace of this cynical egoism of his school; its influence appears rather in his ideal and mystical conception of nature and art. His critical and æsthetic principles can be considered only in relation to the philosophy of which they formed the corner-stone. To the development of this philosophy he was naturally provoked by the dualism involved in Kant's denial of any knowledge save that of phenomena. Fichte's acceptance of the Ego as the one reality had been a step toward the Romantic solution of the difficulty, but Schelling could not rest in a system which ignored the world of art for that of action, and made nature the shadow of a power of soul. It was the aim of the *Identitäts-Philosophie* to penetrate through nature, art, and philosophy,

¹ *William Lovell; Werke*, VI. 222, 235.

to the force of which each was in different degree the manifestation. In the great unity of being, matter and light, soul and nature, ideal and real, are but opposite poles of the same force; art, history, and nature are the same in essence, and are differentiated only by the different powers in which the Absolute exists in each.¹ All that exists thus becomes not only the revelation of God; it is itself God; God and the universe are one, or different views of one and the same thing. But pantheistic as the system is, its pantheism rests on a purely subjective foundation. The subjective alone has original reality or comes directly to knowledge of itself. The mind sees only itself in the outer world; in things is nothing else than what we think into them, in knowledge must we seek the principles of knowledge. In such a philosophy, art, the work of a conscious production analogous to the unconscious production of nature, can neither be, as with Kant, the link between the higher and the lower faculties; nor separated, as it sometimes seems to be with Schiller, from the loftier and more serious interests of life. Art not only expresses the perfect union of the real and the ideal, but through its creations consciousness best knows and contemplates itself. Art, individualizing truth to the utmost, and embodying it in sensuous form, completes and perfects and reveals the blind work of nature; and as the action of nature is as much a part of philosophy as are the highest manifestations of intelligence, the phi-

¹ *Philos. der Kunst*; *Werke*, V. 366.

losophy of art becomes its universal organon, the very centre of its whole system.

When art was conceived as the expression of life in all its phases, philosophy had to deal not with a predominant type of beauty, but with a principle that would underlie and include all types. For his failure to consider beauty as a whole, to unite observation of its forms with perception of its soul, Schelling blamed Winckelmann, though he fully recognized the freedom and ideality of his conception, and the almost creative power of his work.¹ Schelling's own study of art and literature was faithful and enthusiastic, and penetrated by the desire to know of the spirit that moved much of the Romantic study of nature.² He indeed declares the method for studying them to be the same, and dwells on the even higher delight that it must be to a thoughtful man to "penetrate the organism of art, in which the highest unity and lawfulness express themselves with absolute freedom, which lets us recognize the wonder of our own soul far more directly than does nature."³ But if the method and object of æsthetic study were clearly stated, Schelling's definitions of beauty were necessarily indefinite; the amalgamation of freedom and necessity, and the absolute seen in reality⁴ are broad formulæ, and have a touch of vagueness withal. There was, however, no doubt how beauty is to manifest

¹ *Verhältniss der Bild. Künste*; *Werke*, VII. 295.

² *Philos. der Kunst*; *Werke*, V. 363.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 357, 358.

⁴ *Ib.*, pp. 383, 398.

itself ; "the necessary condition and universal material of its representation is mythology."¹ This mythology seems, in the last analysis, at least in Schelling's earlier and greater works, to be nothing more than that mastery of one's environment which makes it the vehicle for expression of the spirit. The mythology of Greece, was, it is true, a vital race-conception, in which was already involved the existence of a Homer, and whose forms were in themselves pregnant with life and meaning.² Yet the great men among the moderns have transformed their age into an individual mythology. Dante, the greatest of them, Shakespeare, and Cervantes, have thus fashioned their world into the image of their thought ; and from the part of *Faust* then published, Schelling recognized the poem as "nothing else than the inmost, purest essence of our age."³

In the universal need of a mythology, the medium through which alone the soul can express itself, and in the reflex influence of the mythology on life and thought, Schelling found the key to the relation between Christianity and art, and to the contrasting spirit of Greek and Christian art. There is in his conception of Christianity and its relations to a common humanity a full recognition of the historical idea that, with its new sense of the time-element in human culture, was working a revolution in modern thought. Christianity was universally significant because rooted in the long-

¹ *Philos. der Kunst* ; V. 405, 406.

² *Ib.*, pp. 415, 416. ³ *Ib.*, pp. 445, 446.

ings and desires of the race ; it found its best warrant in that "it was at first only an expression of the universal spirit, and was the first that expressed and by this fixed it."¹ But the material that it offered to art was the very opposite of that offered by the old mythology.² The material of Greek mythology had been nature, the contemplation of the universe as nature ; that of Christianity was the contemplation of the universe as history, as a world of Providence. This difference was the turning-point between the character and significance of ancient and modern art. In the one the universe was regarded as an indivisible unity of finite and infinite, in the other as a moral world with inevitable contrast and struggle between them. Classic art represents its idea, does not symbolize it ; matter rules, and receives only so much spirit as it can adequately express. In Romantic art matter yields to the higher law of the spirit, becomes the symbol of an idea that it can never fully reveal. Yet Schelling will allow no hard and fast distinctions between ancient and modern art ; even in Greece he finds, in the mystic poems, a tendency the very opposite of that best represented by its poetry. The different forms of art, the varying expression of a common force, are best explained by its history. Only in the history of art, he declares, is the true and inner unity of all works of art revealed, is it shown that all poems are of one and the

¹ *Philos. der Kunst ; Werke*, V. 424.

² *Ib.*, p. 427.

same genius, which reveals itself in the opposite forms of modern and ancient art.¹

In Schelling's philosophy of art the various elements that had been entering into and moulding modern criticism were united in an harmonious system. The atmosphere in which the philosophy had grown up had intensified its thoughts and character. The soul-life, at once the centre and crown of the universe, was its highest study; nature was bound to spirit as a lower manifestation of the same power that most perfectly expressed itself in humanity. There had been much loss in the change from a formal to a sympathetic criticism. The clearness and rectitude of a scientific study of literature was often forgotten in the early endeavors to trace its development; taste at first suffered in delicacy from a too sudden influx of sympathy. But these losses, sure to be supplemented by a longer culture, were more than offset by the gain of the new criticism. Criticism was now firmly established in psychology; the works and faculties of the imagination were henceforth an integral part of philosophy, and their laws were verified and interpreted by correlation with the general laws of thought. The early idea of beauty as a single type and standard of taste had deepened into the conception of beauty as a living and creative power, a power as various and as wonderful as an ever-changing and progressive nature. The study of the development of art and of its relation

¹ *Philos. der Kunst; Werke*, V. 372.

to humanity was the point in which the new philosophy touched most vitally the best of eighteenth century thought; it was the complete and logical adoption of the historic method that was its safeguard against vague and transcendental theory, and that linked it most closely with the broad and direct movement of European culture.

IV.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

THE easy leadership of Germany in the European speculation of the century rested in part on its special fitness to rule the world of thought, in part — and even more generally — on the readiness of Europe to receive its peculiar message. The general Romantic movement toward a spiritual philosophy and a varied national culture, which Germany most typically represented, was in each of the great nations of Europe modified in accordance with its national character and history; and among these various expressions of a common force there were inevitably the most subtle and delicate interactions. England's appropriation of the influence of Germany is curiously illustrative of the transforming and individualizing of the impulse of a kindred Romanticism: for, notwithstanding the attraction of the two nations through community of character and Romantic interest, Germany's intellectuality and mysticism of spirit were utterly alien to the English habit of thought, and, even in the interpretation of the mystic Coleridge, were essentially modified by the national realism. In his attempt to formulate a practical and speculative philosophy, a philosophy deduced from a few underlying principles and according to whose teachings the whole ordering of society was pos-

sible, Coleridge followed closely in the wake of the German Romanticists; but, in spite of these resemblances, his system differs widely from that of his originals, both in its failures in consistency and wholeness, and in its far closer analysis of existing facts and conditions. A Romanticist in spirit, Coleridge was quick to appreciate the new literature of Germany. But his purpose was thoroughly English, and he aimed even more consistently to justify an established government and to found a philosophical theology than to attain to ultimate truth or to give a vital and spiritual interpretation of literature.

The Romantic and conservative character of Coleridge's influence appears very clearly by contrast with that of Bentham, who was not only one of the greatest of his contemporaries, but carried over into our century the social and intellectual traditions of the Enlightenment. Yet Coleridge — conservative and dreamer though he was — did, perhaps, as much as the great radical of his generation to enrich the conceptions of modern science and sociology. His insistence on the constant application of principles both to conduct and judgment, his recognition of the organic wholeness of state or church or work of art, his reiteration of the value and reality of the spiritual life, — these were truths which his countrymen found it easy to forget, but which were none the less essential to any high development. "By Bentham beyond all others," says John Stuart Mill, "men have been led to ask themselves, in regard to any

ancient or received opinion, Is it true? and by Coleridge, What is the meaning of it? The one took his stand *outside* the received opinion, and surveyed it as an entire stranger to it; the other looked at it from within, and endeavored to see it with the eyes of a believer in it.”¹ It is this power of looking at things from within that has made the influence of Coleridge so profound and far-reaching. He did but little, it is true, toward the systematic presentation of his thought; while he meditated his great philosophy, his ideas, for the most part, came to the public as merest hints in lecture or conversation. If his work be measured by the range and completeness of a philosophic system, it is a failure both from this fragmentariness and because of its immediate and practical purpose. It also bears the reproach, whether from dependence or coincidence, of being little more than a translation of German forms of thought into English forms of expression. Coleridge is thus, as philosopher or critic, of little interest in the general history of European thought. In spite of the breadth of his interests, his influence told only on England, and even there was singularly unsystematic and personal. But though his teachings lacked the dignity and coherence of a philosophy, they had the inestimable value of informing narrow sympathy with a more general interest, of stimulating the intellectual life to various and fruitful effort, and of transfusing thought with new delicacy and spirituality.

¹ Coleridge: *Dissertations and Discourses*, I. 394.

By character and temperament Coleridge was perhaps best fitted for the office of translator and transmitter. The receptive and reflective faculties seem from the first to have overshadowed his constructive and artistic power. His German student year, with its delight in even very simple and external details and its many-sided interest in the studies of a German university, showed his rare power to enjoy the most various experiences. The same receptiveness and quick appreciation made the history of his thought the history of the great movements of the world. "The sources of his æsthetics and theology," says Brandl, "must be traced through a perfect maze of English, Greek, and German writings. At the same time he stood in the closest relation to the great events of his time; in his hopes and fears and efforts were reflected the outbreak and collapse of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic wars and the *Befreiungskriege*, the rise of Socialism and the first victories of Liberalism."¹ Nor was his absorption in social and literary and philosophic matters all; both his history and his writings testify to his interest in the great scientific movements of his day. The spirit in which he approached science indeed penetrated all his study, which was throughout marked by the desire to understand relations and leave to others the detailed observation of facts, and by a delight in symbolism that often made him forget the object or event itself in a search after its meaning. A

¹ Vor. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, p. vii.

touch of indefiniteness of treatment and thought everywhere marks his temperamental likeness to the German Romanticists. It is not only that the world of thought is supreme over the world of fact, the world of reason over that of the understanding, but the material exists only as a revelation of the spiritual, the present loses actuality in the complexity of its relations with the past. Coleridge tells us that before his fifteenth year he had bewildered himself in the mazes of metaphysics and theology; history and particular facts had lost all interest to him, and even poetry, novels, and romances he found insipid. It was by the power of contemporary poets — first by the verses of William Bowles, then by the long and stimulating friendship with Wordsworth — that he was for a time drawn from this life-long mood of introspection and meditation, and from those abstruse researches which exercised the strength and subtlety of the understanding without awakening the feelings of the heart. This period he justly calls the long and blessed interval during which his natural faculties were allowed to expand, and his original tendencies to develop themselves — his fancy and the love of nature and the sense of beauty and form and sound.¹ To the sense of outer reality and of beauty that was its abiding result we owe not only the charm of his few poems, but the comparative sanity that kept his mysticism from sentimentality, and made his reflections tell on the practical criticism of life

¹ *Biog. Lit.*, III. 150, 151.

and literature. For the rest, his weakness of will, his failure to coördinate and perfect his work, were but signs of an over-stimulated period. With the intense activity of imagination and reflection had come a certain practical and executive impotency. Universal emotionalism revenged itself in the short and over-wrought lives of the poets, or in the dull and sluggish conservatism of their later days. Coleridge was only a little more than the rest the victim of the weakness of the age, when he found in dreaming noble poems and philosophies a refuge from the need of creating them.

The sensitive over-subtlety of mind that made Coleridge's poetry but a noble fragment, and his profoundest sayings but hints of a philosophy, vastly widened the scope and delicacy of his critical sympathy. There was, however, a limit in his wide literary charity; his universal appreciation found its exception in his antipathy to both the formalism and the emotionalism of the eighteenth century. The painstaking care of the Classicist was to him a vain and external formality; the sentimentalism of a Sterne or a Richardson shocked the moralist who would widen, not narrow, the realm of law; the earlier criticism offered little to the philosopher who sought to establish the laws of artistic creation and enjoyment. Even its liberal thinkers attempted hardly more than an analysis of the laws of individual taste, while the spirit of the dominant school was as inadequate as its method to

meet the requirements of the new philosophy. Its absolutism and dogmatism were in Coleridge's eye part and parcel of a mechanical and outward analysis, its externality of judgment the sign of a shallow and superficial intellect. He had no patience with the critic who, passing by all the lofty associations of his life, could fix his attention on the "*pin-papers* and *stay-tapes*" which Wordsworth's pedler *might* have carried among his wares.¹ In one of his lectures — to the horror of Henry Crabbe Robinson — he did not refrain from calling the great Doctor Johnson "a fellow."² Those "sober judicious critics," the men of sound common sense who had done the great work of the century before, were, according to him, "those snails in intellect, who wear their eyes at the tips of their feelers and cannot even see unless they at the same time touch."³

Coleridge's revolutionary method of criticism contrasts strikingly with Wordsworth's treatment of the new poetic theories, a treatment as distinctively Classic as the matter is Romantic and radical. The conservatism of Wordsworth's method, like that of Gray and the Wartons, was in part disguised by the heterodoxy of his opinions. The reflective love of nature, sympathy with the older English poets, the acceptance of the emotions as the ruling motives of art, — the declaration of these new principles gave poetry a humanity unknown

¹ *Biog. Lit.*, III. 545.

² H. C. Robinson : *Diary*, January 16, 1812.

³ *Literary Remains*, I. 308.

to the readers of Johnson or Pope or Dryden. The culture of town and society was no longer accepted as the poet's standard; he was referred for his models to humble and rustic life, because there "the essential passions of the heart . . . speak a plainer and more emphatic language," because the manners of rural life are more easily comprehended and more durable, and because there "the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature."¹ So far as Wordsworth thus referred the poet to common speech for the rectification of his vocabulary he was at one with Addison and Boileau; and even the strictest of the Classicists might, with reservations, have agreed that poetry was the language of a man speaking to men.² But the new critic stood alone when he defined poetry to be "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings"; when he declared that the truth with which it dealt was general and operative truth, and that above all it was to be "carried alive into the heart by passion."³ Emotion has here superseded worldly experience as the poet's and critic's guide; in the highest poetry is to be found not only the grandeur of the imagination, but a reflection of the experience of the heart. It is this high and universal wisdom of the heart — a scion of the root of personal suffering, yet beautiful as a flower risen from seed that might have been sown from above⁴ — that gives poetry its

¹ Pref. to *Lyrical Ballads*; *Works*, II. 81.

² *Ib.*, p. 87.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 82, 87, 89.

⁴ *Letter to James Gray*, January, 1816.

charm, and makes it truly "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge."¹ It is in accord with this new conception of poetry that its office was no longer to instruct, but to cultivate and quicken the finer sympathies even through knowledge of what is in itself evil. The foundation of a consistent realism is laid when Wordsworth declares him an "impenetrable dunce or narrow-minded puritan in works of art" who would fail to see in *Tam O'Shanter* those finer ties of imagination and feeling that sometimes bind the vicious to their vice.²

But notwithstanding the modernness of Wordsworth's thought, his object and method were wholly of the old order. Attracted by a certain directness and objectivity of mind to the realism of English inductive criticism, he was still further limited to the enunciation of the individual laws of poetry by the practical purpose of the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*; the example he added to that of earlier critics and schools had its peculiar character, but his criticism was still the declaration of a particular creed and the purely personal judgment of a great poet. To this Wordsworth seems voluntarily to have limited it; for he never went beyond the object that he proposed to himself in the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*,—the statement of what he intended to perform, and the reasons that had determined his choice of purpose. Yet the requirements of a higher criticism he clearly

¹ Pref. to *Lyrical Ballads*; *Works*, II. 91.

² *Letter to James Gray*, January, 1816.

saw, even while declining for himself to have any part in it. In speaking of the *Lyrical Ballads*, he says that to treat the subject clearly and coherently "it would be necessary . . . to give a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country, and to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved; which, again, could not be determined without pointing out in what manner language and the human mind act and re-act on each other, and without retracing the revolutions, not of literature alone, but likewise of society itself."¹ This sketch was comprehensive enough to satisfy even Coleridge; but its analytic and inductive method was hardly more at variance with that of his friend than the practical limitation of its purpose. No one, perhaps, has stated the distinction between the two more clearly than Coleridge himself in contrasting his own treatment of the imagination and fancy with Wordsworth's. "It was," he says, "Mr. Wordsworth's purpose to consider the influence of fancy and imagination as they are manifested in poetry, and from the different effects to conclude the diversity in kind; while it is my object to investigate the seminal principle, and then from the kind to deduce the degree. My friend has drawn a masterly sketch of the branches with their poetic fruitage. I wish to add the trunk, and even the roots so far as they lift themselves above the ground and are visible to the naked eye of our common consciousness."²

¹ Pref. to *Lyrical Ballads*; *Works*, II. 80.

² *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 208, 209.

Wordsworth's criticism was in method the outcome of the best of Classicism, in substance the expression of a purely English Romanticism ; the criticism of Coleridge was marked not only by the spiritual and sympathetic method of the Romantists, but by the cosmopolitanism of thought that they so quickly made their watchword. Nor was this wholly the result of gifts and temperament. Coleridge's training had brought him into touch with traditions more liberal than those of the eighteenth century. James Bowyer, his stern master at Christ's Hospital, early moulded his taste to the preference of Demosthenes to Cicero, of Homer and Theocritus to Virgil, and taught him to see the superiority, in naturalness and truth, of Virgil and Ovid, and of Lucretius and Catullus to the poets of the Augustan age. Bowyer's labors did not end when he had made the boys good Greek and Latin scholars and tolerable Hebraists ; the severest of his lessons, and those requiring the most time and trouble, were the lessons on Milton and Shakespeare.¹ His own style was, according to Lamb, "cramped to barbarism," and his Easter anthems "grating as scrannel pipes";² but he taught his pupils that there was in the loftiest poetry a logic as inexorable as that of science, and by his severity to meaningless phrase or image did his part to cultivate a simple and direct style. Coleridge's gratitude for these lessons is perhaps proof of their value to Bowyer's greatest pupil,

¹ *Biog. Lit.*, III. 145-147.

² Lamb : *Christ's Hospital Thirty Years Ago*.

perhaps proof that he needed no guide to the masters to whom he was spiritually akin. Every man, he says, is born an Aristotelian or a Platonist;¹ and surely there was never more truly a born Platonist than he. In Bacon, as in Spinoza, he found nurture for his idealism. The wisdom of Plato and the mysticism of the Neo-Platonists, the freedom of the English poets and the unworldliness of the mediæval Mystics, prepared him to recognize their spirit when it spoke through a modern philosophy.

Slow as the knowledge of German literature had been in reaching England, there were distinct traces before the end of the century of its general influence. An early sign of the sympathy with Teutonic tradition and of attraction to German ways of thinking that was inherent in the larger Romantic movement, had been an interest in the study of the German language beyond that required for mere business purposes. But it was *Werther*, with its embodiment of revolutionary and Romantic thought, that first brought England closely into touch with Germany. The dramas of Schiller's youth, especially *Die Räuber*, soon after began their influence on the younger generation. Though the Lake poets were among the first to feel their spell, they were not alone in their interest in Germany; everywhere there are signs that point toward the new era. Not only did William Taylor of Norwich translate indefatigably; but there began to appear in the writings of the day distinct

¹ *Table Talks*; *Works*, VI. 336.

traces of the study of German literature. Coleridge had already delighted in Schiller while in the university; Dr. Beddoes, whom he learned to know when lecturing in Bristol in 1795, must have stimulated his interest in German literature; and in May, 1796, he wrote to Mr. Poole that he had already begun the study of the language, and expected that in about six weeks he could read it with tolerable fluency.¹ No sooner did the Wedgewoods' annuity give him freedom of choice than he turned to Germany (September 16, 1798), where he already found in Göttingen a small but eager band of English students. Coleridge threw himself heart and soul into the life of the university. His industry was unremitting, and the course of his studies most liberal.² He listened to Heyne's lectures on the philosophy, government, and customs of the Greeks, studied under him the grammar and history of the German language, and supplemented this by a further course in Gothic; he carried out a part of the plan that he had made two years before,³ by attending lectures on zoölogy — in which Blumenbach began to apply the historic and comparative method — and was further interested in a course of philological criticism of the Bible. But all this was subordinate to his main purpose — the study of philosophy. And philosophy then meant the philosophy of Kant, whose teachings,

¹ *Biog. Lit.; Works*, III. 735.

² Brandl: *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, pp. 253, 254.

³ *Letter to Mr. Poole*, May 6, 1796.

directly or through the interpretation of his disciples, were supreme in the universities.

The charge of plagiarism was inevitable in the case of an author who drew his knowledge from such various sources as did Coleridge, and made so unconscious and impersonal a use of the ideas that fell in his way. He himself seemed singularly free from the desire to claim ownership in the truths that he propagated; thoughts and principles were in his eyes as really a common fund as were the facts of the physical universe. He consistently and gladly subordinated popularity to his great purpose, — the assistance of the mind in the formation for itself of sound and universal principles,¹ — while the disinterestedness of his profession was further proved by his almost spendthrift generosity with ideas. His one care was the assertion of his own independence and integrity of thought. The writings of Kant did more than any other works, he says, to invigorate and discipline his understanding; but he was prepared to receive the critical philosophy by the early study of Plato and Plotinus, of Bruno and Spinoza, and of the unlearned Mystics, who, in the dry land of eighteenth century speculation, had kept his mind from imprisonment in a single dogmatic system, and inspired in him a presentiment of a deeper philosophy. In Schelling's *Natur Philosophie* and *System des Transcendental Idealism*, he first "found a genial coincidence with much that he had toiled out for himself and a

¹ *The Friend*; Works, II. vii.

powerful assistance in what he yet had to do." But though he claims to have thought out a similar system before Schelling's writings had been made public, and points in explanation to the common sources of their inspiration, he disclaims any wish to enter into rivalry with him for the honors so unequivocally his due, not only as a great and original genius, but as "the *founder* of the Philosophy of Nature and the most successful *improver* of the Dynamic System."¹ It seems preëminently true of Coleridge that he cared not from whose lips truth, the divine ventriloquist, spoke, provided only that the words were intelligible and audible.²

The story of Coleridge's obligations to Germany has been worked out with such thoroughness and detail by Professor Brandl that there is here need of only the briefest indication of the sources of his critical inspiration. The intercourse with the Klopstocks, besides his disenchantment with that "very *German Milton*,"³ is interesting as calling out his early impressions of Lessing, whose works were at that time the chief object of his admiration.⁴ He traces a remarkable resemblance to himself in Lessing's portraits, and judges him from this to be "a man of quick and voluptuous feeling; of an active but light fancy; acute, yet acute not in the observation of actual life, but in the arrangement and management of the ideal world, that is in taste and metaphysics."⁴ But

¹ *Biog. Lit.; Works*, III. 264-272.

² *Ib.*, p. 274.

³ *Ib.*, p. 644.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 615.

the sense of spiritual, or at least of mental kinship thus indicated, is not needed to account for Lessing's immediate influence on his thought; in Lessing, Coleridge found that ideal and liberal criticism for which he had long been seeking in vain, that interpretation of form by spirit which was congenial to his own habit of thought, and which made Lessing's comments on Shakespeare a revelation, even to Shakespeare's countrymen, of the artistic unity of his plays. But though Coleridge was inspired by Lessing's criticism, he yet accepted it with a difference; while he followed the earlier critic in his interpretation of the great works of literature, Coleridge showed little sympathy with his deference to authority — which, indeed, he considered not at all — and gave his whole energy to the perfect understanding of his author. In this difference of aim lies the measure of the critical progress of a short half century. The new age had at last taken the right of its greatness, a right long claimed in sonorous words, but hardly till now become a part of modern consciousness; and with this new attitude of mind the way was cleared for a more scientific and disinterested study of literature, for a still nearer effort toward that seeing the object as in itself it is, which, interpreted in far different senses, has been the guiding idea in the evolution of our two great schools of criticism.

But Lessing's influence on Coleridge was small beside that of Kant, in whose works he first found the basis for an æsthetic theory, sought in vain in

the most liberal English criticism or in the best defined theories of the experiential philosophy. His æsthetic obligations to Kant were, indeed, but part of a far greater debt; for in the critical philosophy, toward whose positions his previous thought had tended, he found refuge at once from the blank materialism and the vague enthusiasm of his earlier speculations. The extent of his obligation is perhaps best witnessed by Kant's enduring and fruitful influence. He tells us in the *Biographia Literaria* that after fifteen years of familiarity he still read Kant's works "with undiminished delight and increasing admiration"; and a note penciled in one of his books declares his deep conviction that the *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft* ranks with the *Novum Organum* and Spinoza's *Ethics* as one of the three great books written since the introduction of Christianity.¹ It was inevitable that one so deeply penetrated with the spirit of the new philosophy should follow Kant's successors in their endeavors to transcend the contradictions and incompleteness of his system. The influence of Fichte he felt but slightly, and on the whole deprecated as crudely egoistic and barbarous. Yet he recognized him as adding the key-stone to the arch of Kant's philosophy; since by commencing with an *act*, instead of a thing or substance, he had not only given the first mortal blow to Spinoza's Spinozism, but had "supplied the *idea* of a system truly metaphysical."² It was naturally with

¹ *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 264, and note.

² *Ib.*, p. 268.

Schelling, of all the thinkers inspired by Kant, that he found the most abiding resting-place for his thought; but even the mystic idealism of the *Identitäts-Philosophie*, and its synthesis of all powers and faculties, failed in the end to satisfy his desire for a distinctively Christian philosophy.

Though to Lessing, Kant, and Schelling, Coleridge owed the deepest gratitude, there is hardly a great German author of the time by whom his thought was not touched and quickened. For Schiller his admiration was long and deep. He compares *Wallenstein* with Shakespeare's plays in that it forms a species by itself,¹ and there can be no doubt that Schiller's æsthetic writings did their part to guide and stimulate his thought. But so far as Schiller represented the new classic spirit, Coleridge hardly understood or appreciated his work. Enthusiasm for the ideals of antiquity, and acceptance of beauty as in itself the end of art, were alien to the seriousness of thought and moral purpose that went to Greece chiefly for the sources of later idealism and mysticism. Both as artist and philosopher Coleridge cared for the symbolic rather than the simply beautiful, loved music with the Romanticists rather than sculpture and painting with the Classicists. Though he had studied under Heyne, who was then perhaps doing most to make the spirit of Winckelmann at home in the German universities, he seems to have been untouched by Winckelmann's enthusiasm for the beauty of antiquity. On the other hand, Jean

¹ *Table Talk*, February 16, 1833; *Works*, VI. 424.

Paul Richter's freakish humor and penetrating genius were infinitely suggestive to him. Brandl quotes him as saying in an unpublished letter to Henry Crabbe Robinson (1813) that he would willingly have exchanged all his own books but the philosophical ones for the extracts from Jean Paul.¹ His criticisms show everywhere the traces of Richter's influence. Not only did he draw from *Die Vorschule der Ästhetik* (1804-1812) such fundamental ideas as the distinction between imagination and fancy, but there is constantly apparent, however modified by his more philosophic morality, a kindred appreciation of the symbolic and characteristic.

The full measure of Coleridge's attraction toward an ideal at once Christian and Gothic may be seen in his repulsion to almost all that was distinctive in Goethe's teachings. The Romanticism of his temperament, and the seriousness and mysticism of his philosophy, made him at once antagonistic to the motive of Goethe's culture, and kept him from any real appreciation of its character. It is a striking illustration of the uncertainty of even the best contemporary judgment that Coleridge reckoned him among those who by their theories injured the steadiness and originality of Schiller's mind.² He cannot but admit Goethe to be a great artist, and clearly sees his peculiar power of treating his characters from without, of feeling *for* but never *with* them. But in spite of Coleridge's

¹ *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, p. 334.

² *Table Talk*, February 16, 1833; *Works*, VI. 424.

appreciation of his art, Goethe must always have remained to him "the great heathen"¹ of his generation. The idea of translating *Faust* made him doubt whether he ought to render into English a work much of which he thought vulgar, licentious, and blasphemous. It is to the idea of this translation that we owe the account of his own contrasting plan of a Faust. His Mephistopheles was "to be, like Goethe's, the universal humorist, who should make all things vain and nothing worth." Instead of Faust, whom Coleridge finds dull and meaningless, his hero was to be old Michael Scott, whose sin it was not to love knowledge for its own sake, for its own exceeding great reward, but in order to be powerful. Through love for Agatha, Coleridge's Margaret, Michael finds redemption and peace "in the conviction of a salvation for sinners through God's grace."² Between two such conceptions there lay no reconciliation, save in a culture that could transcend and include them both.

The sources whence Coleridge drew his inspiration — even the idiosyncrasies of his personal judgments — are of importance as showing the European relations of his criticism, and the modification of more general principles in a thoroughly English environment. To England itself, in spite of its early groping after the new ideas, his teaching was truly a revelation. The national character

¹ Heine: *Die Rom. Schule*; *Werke*, VIII. 148.

² *Table Talk*, February 16, 1833; *Works*, VI. 423.

declared itself, indeed, in the practical relation that Coleridge would have his philosophy bear to state and society. Because of this positiveness of purpose his theories preserved a definiteness that is lacking in the most typical work of the Romanticists; and his fervent Christianity and his sense of social morality saved him from the excessive egoism that usually marks their revolt against social laws. Yet, however Coleridge might differ from his school, he was at one with it in making the modern spirit of introspection and individualism the corner-stone of his philosophy, and in laying the foundation of his system in that mystery of mysteries, the "intuition of absolute existence."¹ As befitted the disciple of Kant and Schelling, he declared that the principle of our knowing is to be sought within the sphere of our knowing;² it is the very pith of his system to make the mind out of the senses, and not, like Locke, the senses out of the mind.³ Furthermore, while the postulate of philosophy and the test of philosophic capacity is to know oneself, this knowledge involves both the courage to "dare commune with our very and permanent self,"⁴ and the culture of the whole moral being. For in the moral being lies the source of the intellectual; all speculative truths suppose an act of will; and in the will all true reality has both its ground and evidence.⁵ But, notwithstanding this emphasis on

¹ *The Friend*; *Works*, II. 464.

² *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 361.

³ *Table Talk*, July 25, 1832; *Works*, VI. 406.

⁴ *The Friend*; *Works*, II. 108. ⁵ *Ib.*, pp. 108, 469.

the moral foundation of philosophy and speculation, there is a trace of Romantic arrogance in the definition of the powers of the philosopher. For the perception of philosophic truth there is needed not only the culture of mind and will, but that special philosophic consciousness "which lies beneath or behind the spontaneous consciousness natural to all reflecting beings." It is the few only "who know and feel that the potential works in them even as the actual works on them" that can look beyond the little vale where most men pass their lives, and from contemplation learn the true wisdom of life and action.¹

The change in the philosophic point of view shows itself in the new ranking of the intellectual faculties. Not that sense and the more prosaic mental virtues are underestimated; Coleridge reiterates their value in words that might be spoken by Pope or Dryden. He will have a poem either sense or music,² calls good sense the body of poetic genius,³ declares that "no man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher. For poetry is the blossom and the fragrance of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language."⁴ But while poetry is "the identity of all knowledges," while the poet must be also "an historian and naturalist, in the light, as well as the life, of philosophy,"⁵ his knowledge is subordinate to the

¹ *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 336.

² *Table Talk*, April 5, 1833; *Works*, VI. 433.

³ *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 452.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 459. ⁵ *Literary Remains*, II. 378.

higher gift of the imagination; "other men's worlds are his chaos" till they be brought into harmony by that ruling power. The imagination, "the living power and prime agent of all human perception,"¹ is subject to a law no less severe than were the straitest rules of the old criticism. But the law itself has changed its character; the conception of an external rule has yielded to an idea of law as the very power of growth and production;² could a rule be given from without, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art. The new criticism, like the old, declares taste to be supreme; but taste is now the intuition of creative genius, acting in unconscious harmony with intellectual law, and educating the world to a finer perception. The recognition of this higher law appears in the new stress laid on the sanity of genius. The poet, no longer the mere master of knowledge or the victim of an overwrought sensibility, finds in his own genius the law of perfect harmony. In this conception, irregularity of life is as impossible as irregularity of work. Without sanity of judgment, "genius either cannot be, or cannot, at least, manifest itself."³ Shakespeare's dramas were perfect, because in them the imagination and intellectual faculties won a perfect balance and harmony of expression; his "profound, energetic, and philosophical mind"⁴ was hardly less important an element of his genius than his stronger and fresher instinct "to unriddle

¹ *Biog. Lit.; Works*, III. 378.³ *Literary Remains*, I. 118.² *Ib.*, p. 511.⁴ *Ib.*, II. 59.

the world," and penetrate to the mystery of even the commonest thing.¹

In Coleridge's treatment of beauty, the sense of a living law, which dwells in every part and in which every part finds its harmony, is modified by a Romantic and Christian love of symbolism. Whether considering it as artist or philosopher, he was too profound a thinker to confound the beautiful with the useful or the good, or to admit in it the alloy of any measure of personal interest. "Beauty," he says, "is in the abstract, the unity of the manifold, the coalescence of the diverse ; in the concrete, it is the union of the shapely with the vital."² The sense of beauty is in his eyes clearly connected with the practical and philosophic love of relation and order,³ while its special charm lies in the significance of colors and the spontaneity of the curved line, nature's universal and intuitive language.⁴ But the preference for the vital and significant elements of beauty that hardly conceals itself in his definitions is more evident when he speaks of the artist's method of work. He must imitate no outer form, but that "which is within the thing, that which is active through form and figure, and discourses to us by symbols — the *Natur-Geist*, or spirit of nature."⁵ In the idea which moulds the form, which is itself universality and individuality, he finds the true object of his imitation. Shakespeare was great,

¹ *Literary Remains*, I. 243.

² *Ib.*, p. 221.

³ *Table Talk*, December 27, 1831; *Works*, VI. 380.

⁴ *Literary Remains*, I. 270.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 225.

in contrast with Beaumont and Fletcher, because he acknowledged and revered "the eternal distinction between the mere individual and the symbolic or representative."¹ The finite, statuesque beauty of Greek art pleased Coleridge less than the suggestiveness and subjectivity — "the turning the mind inward on its own essence, instead of letting it act only on its outward circumstances and communities" — which is characteristic of mediæval poetry, and is the great modern inheritance from the Middle Ages. If he wished to transcend the pleasure of the eye and understanding, and to have his feelings affected or his heart touched, he would turn from the perfect forms and vivid descriptions of Homer to the heroic songs of the Goths or the poetry of the Middle Ages. In the Greek church his eye was charmed and his mind elated; but on entering a Gothic cathedral he was filled with devotion and awe.² This love of the Gothic in its many forms was doubtless strengthened by the new historic study and the sense of a continuous national life. But it was here that Coleridge most closely sympathized with the purely Romantic spirit, and here, too, that he gave it noblest expression. Mediæval art appealed less to the patriot and the historian than to the mystic; the Gothic cathedral, in all its manifold unity, was "the petrification of our religion,"³ the symbol of that perfect whole in which every phase of humanity's spiritual development found place and significance.

¹ *Literary Remains*, II. 170. ² *Ib.*, I. 71, 72. ³ *Ib.*, p. 69.

The contrasting theories of Coleridge and the critics of the eighteenth century found a practical counterpart in the attitude of the two schools toward society. The revolution that established a vital conception of law and restored the supremacy of the lost imagination, raised literature and philosophy from the estate to which for a time they had descended; and, now that the old order had given place to the new, those sometime ministers of the public good assumed a tone toward the laity that is almost arrogant. Coleridge deprecates nothing more than the idea that a writer should cater to the amusement of his public, even though it be by gratifying a purely intellectual curiosity. Content with such "delight as rewards the march of truth," he seldom allows his readers to "collect the flowers that diversify its track."¹ He scorns the discussion of "new theories; a French constitution; a balloon; a change of ministry; a fresh batch of kings on the continent, or of peers in our happier island."² He demands of genius not that it speak to the many in their own language, but that it raise them to that constant contemplation of permanent truths, and to that freshness of feeling concerning familiar objects, which is its own familiar habit. The attempt of Addison and Dryden to extend the realm of truth by popularizing it, was, according to the new philosophy, little less than profanation. An appeal to the infallible judgment of the public, or deference to its critical decrees, involves the denial

¹ *The Friend*; *Works*, II. 27.² *Ib.*, p. 103.

of that spiritual and philosophic consciousness in which, though it was the condition of all real knowledge, the many had neither part nor lot. The doctrine of the Enlightenment, that trust in the elevating power of reason and sound knowledge which had been the watchword of the ante-Revolutionary thinkers, and which was the inspiration of Godwin and his school, Coleridge thinks rather plausible than just or practical. He had, perhaps, too little faith in the capacity of the race for intellectual improvement; but he felt the tragedy of the social organization more keenly than did his optimistic contemporaries, and perceived, far more clearly than they, many of the deeper conditions of advance. He confronted their logical theories with the indisputable logic of facts. "Society as at present established does not resemble a chain that ascends in a continuity of links. Alas! between the parlor and the kitchen, the coffee-room and the tap, there is a gulf that may not be passed."¹ In such conditions the evils of ignorance and brutality could never be reached by culture of the analytic and discriminative faculties alone. The newly-conceived nature of truth demanded a far different method; the removal of degrading circumstances, the encouragement of the sympathetic passions, and the cultivation of moral taste were to be the work of that little band who are worthy the name of patriots.

If Coleridge asked of the author constant fidelity to his ideal, he demanded of the reader no mere

¹ *The Friend*; Works, II. 303.

passive receptivity, but an active coöperation with his thought. This exertion of the reason and the will, of which he despairs in the masses, of all things demands the longest apprenticeship and the severest and most strenuous activity.¹ The general fondness for the fashionable lady's novel he ascribed to the universal dislike of vacancy and the love of sloth, which seeks excitement without that reaction of the faculties that can alone turn knowledge to power.² To counterbalance this inborn mental sluggishness of the mass of mankind, Coleridge thought a learned class necessary to the existence of a state — or at least of a Christian state. Without it the desire for a general illumination might lead to the popularization of learning; but its philosophic spirit could alone prevent even this from ending "in the plebification of knowledge."³ The evil influence on genius itself of a direct appeal to the masses, he traced in the work of one whose transcendent greatness he ever recognized. Not only did Burke lose in influence by the measure in which he surpassed his contemporaries; but the unity and entirety of his philosophy was spoiled by the half-contradictions that followed an appeal to different principles according to occasion and opponent. The fact "that Burke in his public character found himself, as it were, in a Noah's ark with a very few men and a great many beasts," compelled those compromises

¹ *The Friend*; *Works*, II. 63.

² *Literary Remains*, I. 200.

³ *The Friend*; *Works*, II. 407.

of greatness with meanness, of comprehension with narrowness, of philosophy with practice, which were fatal to the development of the highest truth ; if it was his fate to 'cut blocks with a razor,' the weapon, at least with respect to truth, was injured in the misapplication.¹ Something of the same loss of higher power Coleridge sees in the modern degradation of literature to meet a popular need and standard. He finds the true spirit of literature in the lofty address of Bacon : "These are the meditations of Francis of Verulam, which that posterity should be possessed of, he deems *their* interest." But now, when books, fallen from their first high estate as religious oracles, are "degraded into culprits, to hold up their hands at the bar of every self-elected yet not the less peremptory judge," there seems to him small chance of resisting the temptation to subserviency and frivolity.²

The principles of the new philosophy, and the rapid increase of historic interest, involved a change in the conception of the functions of criticism. Under the new conditions, its task lay chiefly in the understanding of the complex relations of literature to life, in the perception of the laws according to which genius works, and especially in the establishment of the principles of literary judgment. It called fair and philosophical only "that investigation in which the critic announces and endeavors to establish the principles which he holds for the foundation of

¹ *The Friend*; *Works*, II. 174.

² *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 184, 185.

poetry in general, with the specification of these in their application to the different classes of poetry.”¹ The ultimate end of criticism was declared “much more to establish the principles of writing, than to furnish rules how to pass judgment on what has been written.”² He might be a refined gentleman, but must be a very sorry critic, who reads a work meant for immediate effect on one age with the notions and feelings of another.³ Coleridge’s power of applying so impersonal and philosophical a criticism is perhaps best shown in his treatment of the English Classic poets. His own definitions make it impossible that he should find even Pope a poet ; and a total want of sympathy with the Classic spirit prevented him from any deep enjoyment of his poems. Yet he could recognize the excellence of the school in its own kind, — in just and acute observations, in the logic of wit, conveyed in strong and epigrammatic couplets,⁴ in the exquisiteness of its language and the sweetness of its metre.⁵ But whatever its greatness, it failed in the inward principle that distinguishes every true poem, and made no appeal either to passion or imagination ; it was “characterized not so much by poetic thoughts, as by thoughts translated into the language of poetry.”⁶ Its poetic failure

¹ *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 536.

² *Ib.*, p. 510.

³ *Literary Remains*, I. 180.

⁴ *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 153.

⁵ *Literary Remains*, II. 70.

⁶ *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 154.

lay not in the artificiality of the verse — for who could be more artificial in their workmanship than Shakespeare and Milton? — but in its fantastic and arbitrary language, in the glitter of its perpetual and heterogeneous imagery, and in its sacrifice of both head and heart to point and drapery.¹

Coleridge shows his own affinity, as well as the critical tendencies of the time, by his constant appeal to the earlier English writers. Though he recognizes the influence of Pope and his school in perfecting a mechanical metre, he lays the apparent metrical failure of the older poets to imperfect and corrupt texts, or to our ignorance of the meaning that with them determined rhythm.² The texts he would have, as far as possible, restored, after the classic example of Bentley and Porson, by the application of a sound philosophy of metre, and he declares that the difficulties of reading them are infinitely lessened by a knowledge of the true nature of their verse.³ In the older poets, moreover, the moderns find not only the enrichment of their metres, but the constant rectification of a narrow taste and judgment. It was in the diction and metre of the English poets from Chaucer to Milton, as well as in those of the Greeks from Homer to Theocritus, that Coleridge in his youth found a defense for the overflow.⁴ Southey's taste, which he always praises, had been more vitally formed by the study of the best

¹ *Biog. Lit.; Works*, III. 158.

² *Literary Remains*, I. 108, 109.

³ *Ib.*, II. 291.

⁴ *Biog. Lit.; Works*, III. 156.

models in his own language than by learning of Horace and Quintilian and their fellows.¹ The strength of Coleridge's sympathy with the past appears in his turning to the early prose writers as well as the early poets, and in the value that he sets on the vitality and force of their English. A peculiar service of our version of the Bible lies in the fact that it has preserved to us the force and purity of many terms that would otherwise have been refined to meaninglessness.² In the days of Chaucer and Gower our language might be but a wilderness of vocal reeds from which the favorite of Pan or Apollo could alone construct even the rude syrinx; yet the expressiveness of this imperfect instrument was far preferable to the mechanical perfection of a later time.³ Neither was the vitality of early language its only advantage; the philosopher who could see the object in its manifold relations found a charm in the very intricacy and complexity of our older prose. In the great Greek orators Coleridge loved the richness of connective particles that sometimes escape a mere grammatical classification, and that vanished from a later and more formal style;⁴ he never ceased to admire "the stately march and difficult evolutions, which characterize the eloquence of Hooker, Bacon, Milton, and Jeremy Taylor."⁵ Though he recognized the unfitness of this style

¹ *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 184.

² *Table Talk*, June 24, 1827; *Works*, VI. 288.

³ *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 170.

⁴ *Table Talk*, September 2, 1833; *Works*, VI. 488.

⁵ *The Friend*; *Works*, II. 31.

for periodical literature, he could not overcome his "aversion to the epigrammatic, unconnected periods of the fashionable Anglo-Gallican taste, . . . — a style which an ancient critic would have deemed purposely invented for persons troubled with asthma to read, and for those to comprehend who labor under the more pitiable asthma of the spirit."¹ Indeed the language of the day seemed to Coleridge hopelessly mechanized, the barrel-organ that supplied at once instrument and tune, and literature, as ordinarily followed, the trade of all others that demanded least talent or information.²

The criticism that grew up under Coleridge in the early years of this century showed a strange mingling of loss and gain, of advance and retrogression. The sources and tendencies of its philosophy were alike contradictory. Its pride of intellect and mystical love of the past united much sound philosophy with something of the narrow egoism of the Romanticists; its re-valuation of the intellectual powers resulted hardly more from sympathy with the creative periods of literature than from the new conception of the living and moulding forces at work in the universe; the most momentous change in its method, the acceptance of the spiritual life as the source of knowledge, in part completed, in part undid, the work of the experiential philosophers. Inevitable and benefi-

¹ *The Friend*; *Works*, II. 31.

² *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 170, 171.

cent as, in part, its changes were, there are in all of them traces of an excessive reaction against the preceding century, — its easy reasoning and confident conclusions, its contemplation of material interests and absorption in the actual and present. But in two great thoughts that Coleridge made a familiar part of English culture there can be seen only the perfecting of the past ; in the acceptance of principles as the foundation of practice and judgment, and in the recognition of the organic wholeness of literature and society, the century that Coleridge misunderstood and the new philosophy that he taught met and fulfilled each other.

To the generation that had listened to Edmund Burke the value of principles in the conduct of life and society was a familiar tale. In Coleridge's day, Bentham, though the leader of another school, insisted like him that all laws should be traced to their ultimate principles, and that only in these lay a sufficient ground of action. But if Coleridge did not stand alone in preaching this gospel, he was alone in his method and spirit of applying it. His acceptance of traditional institutions, his sense of the complexity of human relations, his habit of looking at truth from within rather than from without, made his constant appeal to principles singularly fruitful in suggestion. With his moral and religious purpose it is natural that he should refuse to an action disjoined from its principle any moral quality, should declare principles grounded in reason to be the basis and living fruit of all

experience.¹ Nor could the highest philosophy ever rest in its search for that ground common to the world and to man wherein it may find the one principle of permanence and identity.² To attain this ultimate truth every theory is subject to the severest scrutiny, to an analysis in which its errors cannot but be detected. As each half-truth is understood by a knowledge of its broader relations, so in his philosophy — "the attempt to reduce all knowledges into harmony"³ — each system is complete only in the light of its opposite. By the separation of "that from each which is for all ages" from its particular inductions and applications, systems apparently the most diverse are found the same in the science of method and in its grounds and condition.⁴ This distinction between the fundamental and the superficial, the permanent and the transient, is the work of statesman and critic as well as of philosopher. It was Burke's habitual reference to principles that made him a scientific statesman, and therefore a seer.⁵ Of Wordsworth's discussion of metre Coleridge complains that, ingenious as it is and touching in all points on truth, he yet finds in it no statement of the powers of metre considered absolutely and separately; and that the estimate of it in combination with other elements leaves the very point of the difficulty untouched. It is in this facing of the ultimate difficulty, in great matters and small,

¹ *The Friend*; *Works*, II. 141.

² *Ib.*, p. 459.

³ *Table Talk*, September 12, 1833; *Works*, VI. 373.

⁴ *The Friend*; *Works*, II. 442.

⁵ *Biog. Lit.*; *Works*, III. 296.

that Coleridge's strength lies ; there is in his philosophy no rest till thought and act alike are free in the contemplation of a reasonable and perfect truth.

Coleridge's habit of living and thinking by great principles was vivified by his recognition of the evolution in human progress, and of the organic nature of thought. His love of fresh and vital expressions, rather than of more polished and mechanical forms, was but a sign of his sense of an immanent living force in everything. The mysterious and undemonstrable, which his philosophy called the root of all knowledge, perhaps made him sensitive to those processes of growth and development that his predecessors had so wholly ignored. But the air was full of the new truth. The days of Lamarck and Darwin were at hand ; Kant and Goethe had fairly grasped the idea of evolution. Even earlier than the conception of evolution in the physical world had grown up the thought of the development and education of the race. This work, begun by the great French historians and carried on in their different ways by the great German critics, was infinitely stimulated by the Romantic sympathy with the past. It was this idea of man's historical relations and development that Coleridge made a moulding power in English thought. Though interested in the tendency of scientists toward a belief in evolution, he was content to leave the investigation in the hands of those "capable of demonstrating its objective truth," with the hope

that we might thence receive "one other splendid proof that with the knowledge of law alone dwell power and prophecy."¹ 'In this philosophic aspect of science Coleridge must, by mental temperament, have been interested. He says that he could walk over the plain of Marathon without taking any more interest in it than in any other similar plain,² and that, in all his wide reading of history, when he had got his principles he let his facts take care of themselves.³ His interest was in the great forces guiding the progress of the race and the advance of society, rather than in the condition of any individual. Coleridge is, moreover, true to his philosophy in that he never counts progress quick or easy, or the result of artificial methods. He perceives that the advance of a people or of the human race can be in no straight line; the end may demand temporary stagnation, or retrogression, or destructive revolution. Yet, because of its slowness and complexity, the laws of cause and effect work in it none the less constantly; and true wisdom lies in the perception of this working, and the acceptance of the affairs of man as part of a long process.⁴ In pure criticism this sense of the interaction of many forces in literature shows itself in the effort to distinguish what is of its own age and what is of all time, and to trace the influence of the permanent and the transient upon each other. But it is even more

¹ *The Friend*; *Works*, II. 427.

² *Table Talk*, August 4, 1833; *Works*, VI. 473.

³ *Ib.*, July 13, 1832; *Works*, VI. 401.

⁴ *The Friend*; *Works*, II. 363, 302.

influential in giving a philosophic foundation for the trust in genius that was characteristic of the thought of the period. In a world where human life was seen to express itself in ever new forms there was an inspiring analogy between the growth of society and the creative work of the imagination. Literature, like history, found in itself its own law of progress ; it was the vocation of criticism to understand that law, and to judge each type after its kind.

However variously Coleridge's theories be judged, the delicacy of his critical perception raises him above the limitations of any school. The most musical and philosophic poet of the century could not bring his poetic intuition to bear on the critical study of literature without enriching for all time our conception of its spirit and purpose. This sympathetic understanding of his peers it is unfair to claim as the exclusive mark of his school ; it had already spiritualized the Classicism of Lessing, and liberalized the culture of St. Évremond and Addison and Gray. But Coleridge's possession of a sympathetic temperament made him not only a great interpreter of literature, but a typical critic of the new Romanticism. Dryden's integrity of thought had never hindered him from making the greatest of ancients and moderns into the image of his own age ; Coleridge's sensitive and sympathetic appreciation but reflects the spirit that guided the energies and blurred the judgments of his con-

temporaries. In the reaction against monotonous standards and narrow interests, criticism began to perceive in the most unlike types the expression of a common and all-powerful force; and if the new enthusiasm for variety and originality dulled the earlier sense of perfection, it yet first made possible a true conception of either excellence or relation in the world of art. By the sensitiveness of his nature and his sympathy with the historic and scientific spirit of his time, Coleridge was the preacher of these new doctrines; and his poetic intuitions were thus at once the instrument and the crown of his intellectual endeavor. His interpretation of literature was founded on the perception, both spiritual and scientific, of the interdependence of varying types and expressions, and of the ruling power of the creative imagination — a perception that touched even the most personal of his judgments with the light and dignity of philosophy.

The delight that all readers of English literature find in Coleridge's poetic and appreciative criticism is followed by a sense of disappointment, if we would measure it either by the philosophy that he meditated or by the long critical effort of which it was the culmination. Between Coleridge and Dryden there lay more than a century of critical activity, and the most stimulating contact with the great sources of European thought. Yet the critical system that crowns this progress, whether tried by the broader movements of its own day or the narrower perfection of an earlier

system, is alike imperfect and incomplete. The critical school that ruled England from Dryden to Johnson, and cast the shadow of its authority far over into our century, knew its own mind and understood the conditions in which it worked. But its practical and limited purpose was meaningless to the founder of a great synthetic philosophy; and the definiteness, lucidity, and practical effectiveness of its style and thought were hardly virtues in the eyes of a criticism whose reach so far exceeded its grasp as did that of Coleridge. Nor did all-embracing effort after a great spiritual synthesis separate the new criticism from the old alone; it cut it off as well from the positive and objective methods of its more liberal contemporaries. Wordsworth's endeavor after an inductive criticism that might uphold the new theories was barely justified in the eyes of Coleridge; his love of antiquity was so thoroughly that of the mystic and philosopher that he left it to Shelley to preach the artistic and rounded culture of Greece. It was this ignoring of the directly progressive movements of his age that made Coleridge's system so little representative of its time, that marked it as one of those phases of temporary retrogression which are among the most interesting and necessary phenomena of human progress. While Coleridge misunderstood the broadest culture of his day, neither the gifts of poet and metaphysician, nor the conception of a noble philosophy of criticism, could save him from the nervelessness and practical impotency that

from the first blighted the fairest promises of Romanticism.

But the failure of the new criticism in practical achievement was due far less to the reactionary narrowness of a part of its thought than to the extreme difficulty of the task set criticism in the end of the last century, and to the inevitable modification of its character by the complex experiences with which it had to deal. From the Elizabethan glory of English literature—a glory that marks the quickening of mediæval life by fresh contact with the great culture of antiquity—England's intellectual progress had advanced in a double course. Outwardly and evidently men's minds had turned toward an ideal of ever-increasing reasonableness, of the widening application of the laws in whose contemplation they had come to delight. Beside this,—but far less apparent than the greater scientific movement,—there went on the slow attempt to assimilate foreign cultures and make them really a part of modern experience. The dependence on Rome that marked the early stages of this double progress, though inevitably following the long mediæval training of Europe and the fitness of Latin modes of thought to subdue a tasteless intellectual disorder, was by still more enduring conditions doomed to pass. Even before its establishment in undisputed authority the signs of a more liberal culture were evident. Beginning as this did in England in an assertion of taste and judgment different from that of antiquity, it had, by the end of the eighteenth

century, transformed itself into a living knowledge of Greece and Rome, a cosmopolitan interest in Europe, and a return to the sources of national and race experience. This general movement was, moreover, both intellectual and emotional. The new study of history, the reviving spirit of nationality, and the growing refinement of taste, had hardly more share in it than the passionate assertion of individualism and a vague and inartistic sympathy with the symbolism of the Middle Ages. Nor did criticism have to consider these complex emotional and intellectual conditions alone. A new science asked a new statement of critical principles; a world of intense and many-sided experience was to be correlated to the conception of a changing and developing universe.

It was inevitable that the criticism arising in such an age, and largely representing its reactionary tendencies, should be a promise and a suggestion; that its suggestion returned to vitalize a sturdier criticism and a more experimental philosophy, is its great glory. The greatness of the second period of English criticism can be measured neither by the evolution of the system nor by a simple, direct, and continuous influence; it represented but a few of the complex conditions of its time, but it was infused by the great ideas that were to be the breath and finer spirit of the culture of our century. The assertion of its fundamental doctrine, the value of principles to both conduct and judgment, has been potent to transform even the thought most opposed to Coleridge's phi-

losophy; the sense of a vital and living force in thought and literature was in accord with the science of the day, and, giving and receiving alike, has laid the foundation for the philosophical as well as the æsthetic and the critical study of literature. True, the influence of Coleridge has been scattered and fragmentary. In church, in state, in literature, his spirit has descended to many whose theories and purposes are otherwise widely different. John Henry Newman and Frederick D. Maurice alike owe their inspiration to him; John Stuart Mill can call him one of the two great moving forces of the century; Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold carried on in their different fashions his European and cosmopolitan culture of England. His literary criticism is of the same scattered and fruitful sort. In his suggestions lies the germ of a higher development, the spirit that must inform the great and enduring work of the future. Fragmentary as his writings are, there is yet opened through them an ideal criticism that has never been reached, and for which we can only hope if the clear intellectuality of the eighteenth century shall come to blend with the spirituality that complemented and destroyed it.

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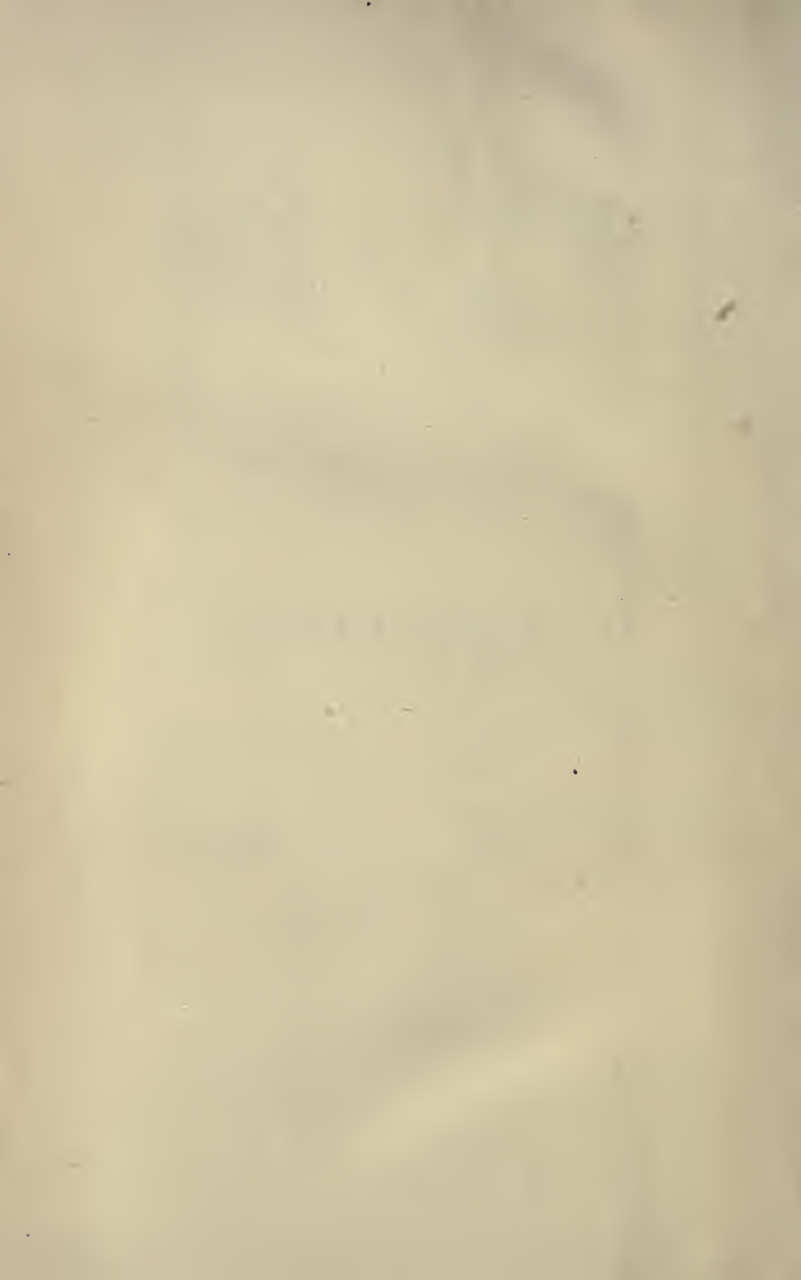
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